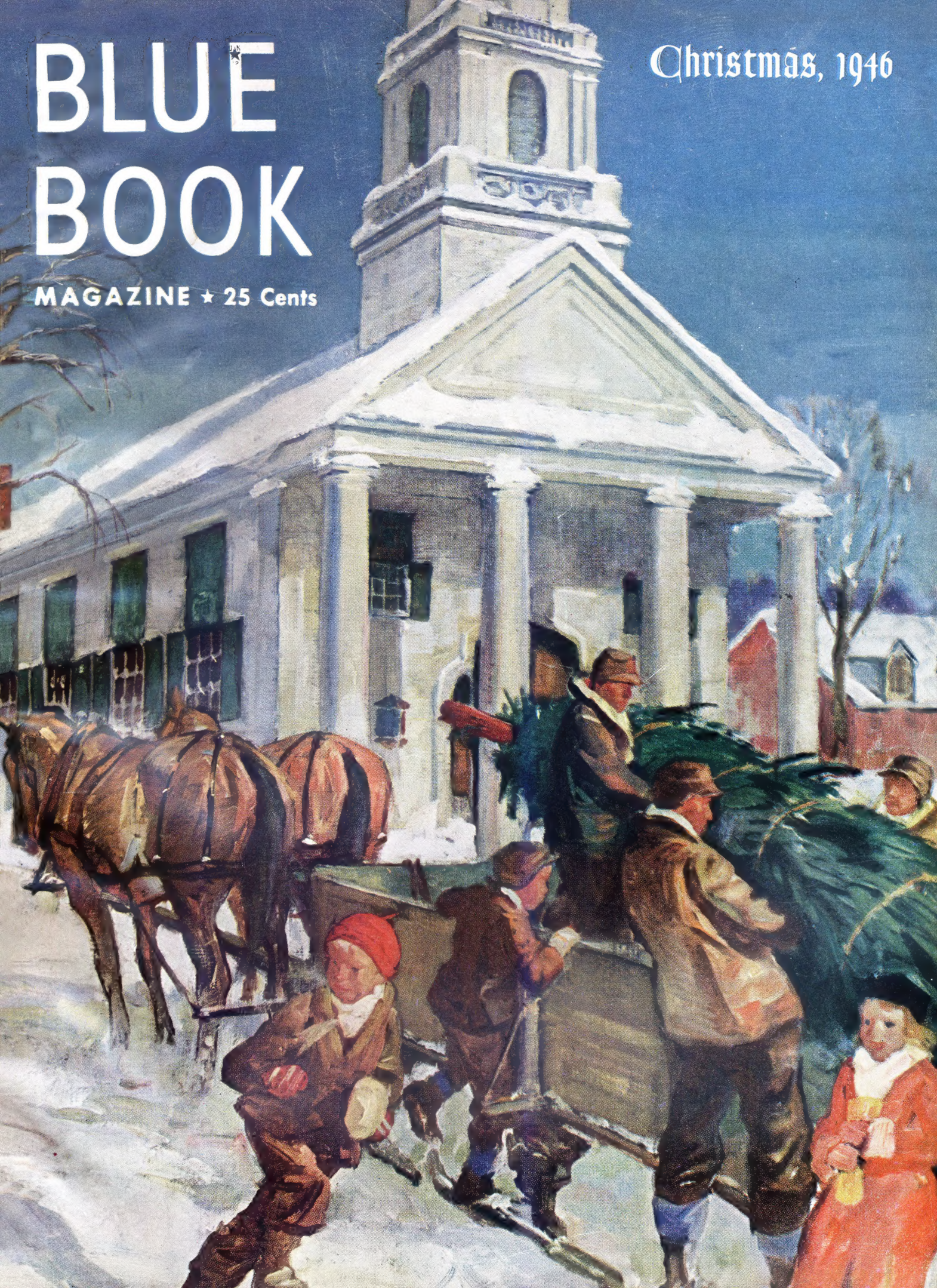


BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE ★ 25 Cents

Christmas, 1946

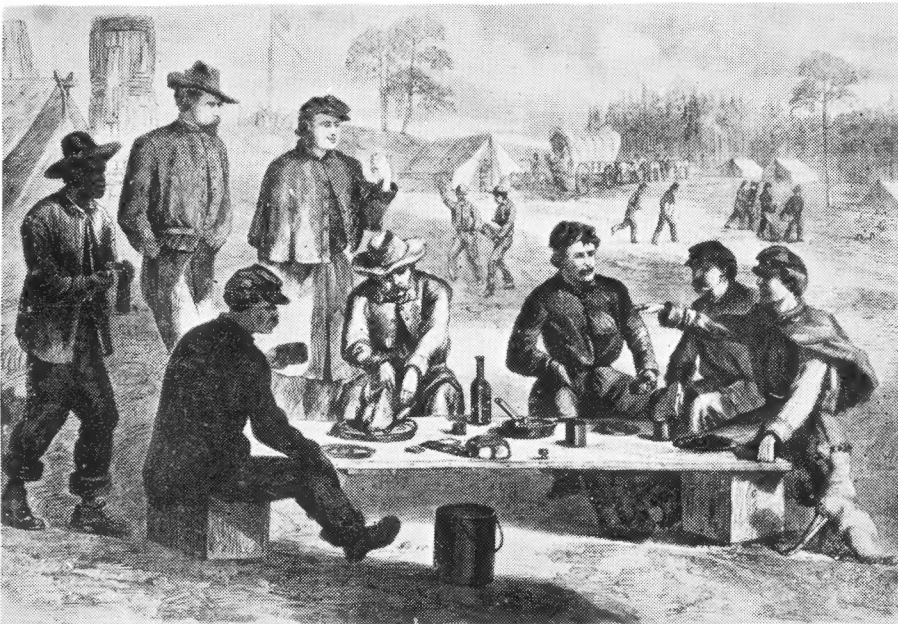


HOLIDAYS

OLD-STYLE



(At left) Ringing the Christmas chimes in Trinity Church, New York, 1872.
(Above) Carol singers in New England, about the same date.



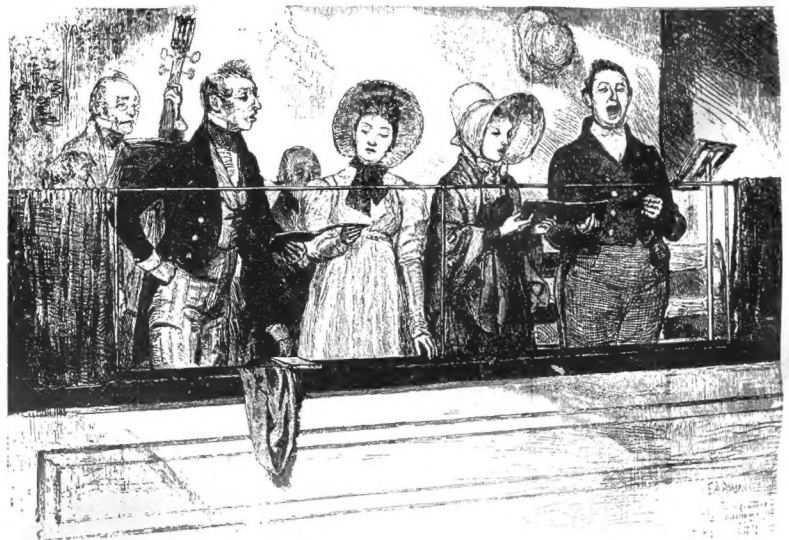
A Civil War Thanksgiving dinner just behind the front.



Decorating an old-time New England church, 1872.



The Moment of Triumph—a new sealskin jacket (1886) Christmas morning in a country church. At right: Edwin Abbey's drawing of a Christmas-time choir-loft. (Old prints from Three Lions, Schoenfeld Collection.)



Readers' Comment

Honestly

ASIDE from the fact that BLUE Book is virtually free from female influence, I admire it because it is one of the very few non-commercialized magazines. It is rare indeed to find a magazine that is merely selling itself and not a hundred other products. To my way of thinking it is an extraordinary accomplishment.

The average publication today is about seventy-five percent or more ads, advertisements or "What can we sell you?" commercials. This may be fine for those who can stand reading stories fringed in soap, tobacco or cream ads, but I'm not that type.

So, honestly, I enjoy your magazine. It's like a radio program without a commercial.

Thomas J. Morton

There's Not Space to Tell Much

BEING a new reader of the BLUE Book, I realize it is not for me to criticize. But I believe it would be more convenient for the readers if you would in the contents tell the type of story it is, such as fight, war, etc. Readers then can pick up the stories they like to read first.

Roy Pertle

Statement of the Ownership, Management, Circulation, Etc., required by the Acts of Congress of August 24, 1912, and March 3, 1933

of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, published monthly at Dayton, Ohio, for October 1, 1946.

I, before me, Notary in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared John D. Hartman, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Treasurer of McCall Corporation, Publisher of The Blue Book Magazine, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:
Publisher, McCall Corporation, 230 Park Avenue, New York, 17, N. Y.; Editor, Donald Kennicott, 230 Park Avenue, New York, 17, N. Y.; Managing Editor, none; Business Managers, none.

2. That the owner is: McCall Corporation, Wilmington, Delaware. Names and addresses of stockholders holding one per cent or more of the capital stock of McCall Corporation are: Oliver B. Capen, c/o Chase National Bank, Personal Trust Division, 11 Broad Street, New York, N. Y.; Irving M. Day, c/o Guaranty Trust Company, 140 Broadway, New York, N. Y.; French & Company, Packard Building, Philadelphia, Pa.; Hamilton Gibson, c/o First National Bank, Trust Department, Orlando, Florida; Kelly & Company, c/o Guaranty Trust Company, 140 Broadway, New York, N. Y.; Mansell & Company, 45-47 Wall Street, New York, N. Y.; Sibyl Moore Warner, 158 Elderwood Avenue, Pelham, N. Y.; Robert Cade Wilson, c/o Irving Trust Company, One Wall Street, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

John D. Hartman, Treasurer.
Sworn to and subscribed before me this 9th day of September, 1946, Frank J. O'Leary, Notary Public, Queens County, Queens Co., Clerk's No. 3144, Reg. No. 102-0-8. Certificates filed in N. Y. Co. Clerk's No. 196, Reg. No. 211-0-8. (My commission expires March 30, 1948.)

BLUE BOOK

December, 1946

MAGAZINE

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Cover Design Painted by Herbert Morton Stoops

Except for articles and stories of Real Experience, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence

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The Case of the Glass

by JAMES HOWARD LEVEQUE

THE street was known as Brennaman's Beat, and from one end of it to the other the residents called it that. It had another name on the city maps; but day after day, summer and winter, for nearly thirty years, the heavy hard-heeled brogans of Officer Tim Brennaman had pounded it, almost from the common memory.

Yet this morning Tim looked at the familiar scene and felt like an alien. Worse, he felt old. The parallel scar where the streetcar tracks had been and the lamppost knocked askew by that runaway milk-truck were both there; so were the shabby old buildings, the littered sidewalks and Sam LaPin's flickering neon sign that Mamma Schultz complained "winked so loud" she couldn't sleep. But there were no clues.

Four days now, and no clues.

It had seemed so simple, so petty: just the theft of a ring that had cost

no more than a quarter at the five-and-ten-cent store.

Brennaman had felt like a fool when he had reported its disappearance to Desk Sergeant Radjewski at the Fourth Precinct Station. It had given the boys quite a laugh. Every hour or two thereafter, the prowler-car would cruise by, and two bright young cops would call Tim over and ask him seriously about the latest developments in the Case of the Glass Koh-i-noor; then the car would lunge off, while Tim stood at the curb amid echoes of dying laughter and clouds of exhaust-fumes.

They didn't know what the ring meant to the people of Brennaman's Beat. They didn't know that Papa Otto Schultz, the unofficial "mayor," had written a speech about it, particularly stressing the point that the ring had little material value, that for him and for his neighbors it was a symbol of loyalty, of courage, of hope for the future. They didn't know that Father Lassiter had blessed it, that Carl the baker had designed a wedding-cake in

its image, that Jim the jeweler had painstakingly wrought two wedding bands to match it. They did not know about Rosanna.

Brennaman turned and moved up the street. Luigi's barber-shop was just ahead, and he never failed to look in and inquire, "What's your cut-rate today, Luigi?" The little barber always had some comical answer. Frequently, Tim would go in and comb white hair over his bald spot or let Luigi's boy run a brush over the ample blue uniform.

Today he hesitated at the door. Luigi had lost two dollars to a hair-tonic salesman. When the ring had turned up missing, Luigi had bet two bucks that Tim Brennaman would have it back within a day. Luigi had lost.

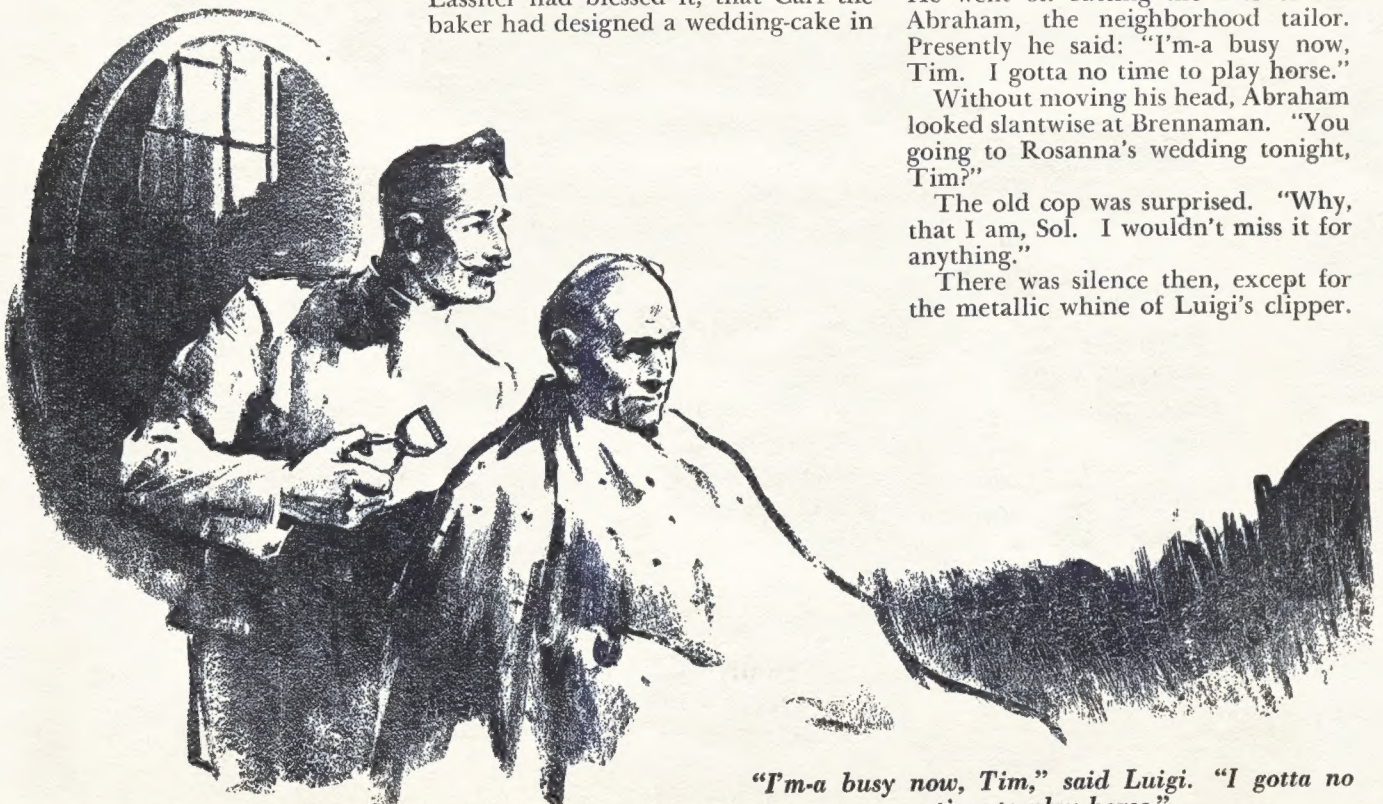
Tim turned the knob and pushed the door open. A bell tinkled overhead. He called cheerily: "What's your cut-rate today, Luigi?"

The barber didn't answer at once. He went on cutting the hair of Sol Abraham, the neighborhood tailor. Presently he said: "I'm-a busy now, Tim. I gotta no time to play horse."

Without moving his head, Abraham looked slantwise at Brennaman. "You going to Rosanna's wedding tonight, Tim?"

The old cop was surprised. "Why, that I am, Sol. I wouldn't miss it for anything."

There was silence then, except for the metallic whine of Luigi's clipper.



"I'm-a busy now, Tim," said Luigi. "I gotta no time to play horse."

Koh-i-noor

The ring was worth about a quarter, but for special reasons it meant a lot to the folks along Brennaman's Beat; and in the four days since its theft he had found no clues at all.

Tim cut it short. "Well, gotta mush. Work fast, Luigi. See you, Sol." He stepped back through the door and moved on.

It wasn't the two dollars. Tim knew that. It was just that the people of Brennaman's Beat had grown accustomed to bringing him their problems, big ones and little ones, and—until the theft of the two-bit ring—had expected him to solve anything. The thought that he had failed made his soul squirm inside his body.

He avoided looking in the drug-store and the fish-market by swinging to the curb and pretending interest in traffic up the street. But there was no way of escaping Papa Schultz, who was standing at the curb, watching him approach.

"No news of the ring?" he asked anxiously. Tim shook his head, and Papa Schultz stood there staring past his huge mustache, at the pavement. His thumbs were thrust in his lower vest pockets; his fingers slowly patted the bulge of his stomach. "It is not important, Tim. Rosanna was just in here. She told me so."

Tim said: "That's fine." But he knew it was important. It irritated



"I'm resigning," Tim said. "Tonight." Vicelli studied Tim's face. "What about the D.A.?"

him to hear Papa Schultz, out of mistaken kindness, say it wasn't. Tim didn't want sympathy, from Papa Schultz, from Rosanna, from anybody. If he had failed, he wanted them to say so.

Papa Schultz was no good at guessing people's thoughts. He went on: "It is just one of those things, Tim. You should not feel badly. Everybody knows you tried; everybody knows you got no help from Radjewski; everybody knows it's not your fault."

Tim said, "Thanks," and turned. No use getting sore at Papa.

"Even yet I bet you find it." Papa sounded confident. "It maybe wasn't stolen at all, but lies in a place you never thought to look."

"See you, Otto," Tim said and moved off. . . .

It was stolen, all right. No doubt of it, no chance of a mistake. One minute the ring had been on the windowsill in Rosanna's kitchen; the next minute it had vanished. Rosanna had looked everywhere, inside the house and out, before calling in the neighbors. They had brought their flashlights, had got down on hands and knees in the paved alley outside the kitchen window; they had moved the kitchen furniture; they had looked everywhere, had asked Rosanna a hundred questions.

Why had she taken the ring off? She always took it off when she washed dishes after coming home from work.

She always placed it on the windowsill. Why had she left the kitchen? To answer the front-door bell. Who was there? Nobody. Who was in the house with her? She was alone. Where was Jerry, her brother? He had gone to the corner news-stand to get magazines for them both.

It wasn't reported to Tim until he came on duty next morning and he had gone over the ground thoroughly. There was no mistake. The ring had been stolen.

A voice called from across the street: "Hold it, Tim! Want to see you."

Brennaman halted and watched Frank Vicelli, Luigi's brother, cross over. He was the neighborhood cobbler, a newcomer to Brennaman's Beat—he had been there only ten or eleven years. Brennaman's lips tightened.

"How's tricks, Tim?"

"Fair."

Vicelli's voice went low. "Do any more thinking about my proposition?"

"I told you last week, Frank. I said no."

"Be sensible, Tim. You're getting old. Another year, and you'll be retired. A cop's pension isn't much these days."

"It'll be enough."

"Nobody could blame you if you made a little dough for yourself after all these years. There's a lot of money in this neighborhood—been saving it all their lives. The police commissioner wants a bookie and a numbers



game down here. The alderman wants it."

"I don't care what they want. No gambling joint is opening up on my beat."

"I happen to know there'd be a promotion in it for you—maybe even a soft spot at Headquarters."

"I was turning down promotions before you were born, Frank. And I don't like it at Headquarters. I like it here."

"They could bust you, you know."

"Could they, now—on what charge?"

"Oh, I don't know. They could find a reason."

"They don't want to try, Frank, and you know it. They're scared to. I'd hand the D.A. a stack of affidavits a foot high, and heads would roll all over."

"They could transfer you to the sticks."

"I'd resign in an hour. And hand the D.A. a stack of affidavits two feet high. No, they understand me, and I understand them, Frank. They lay off my beat with their rackets, and I keep my mouth shut about what I know. It's the best deal they can get out of me. . . . So they're waiting until I retire. You're the one who won't wait, Frank."

Rosanna's teen-age brother turned the corner. As he came abreast, there was a knowing grin on his face.

He said: "Hi, Frank. Hello, Mr. Brennaman."

Tim said: "High school out today, Jerry?"

"No, but I am! With Rosanna and René getting married tonight, I'm running errands. And say! What do you think—René's flying in from the Coast! He's due at seven. Boy, I hope he makes it!" And Jerry hurried off.

Vicelli asked: "Well, so that's final, Tim?"

"It was final last week."

"I hope you never wish you'd changed your mind."

"That crack mean something?"

"No. Nothing at all, Tim. Only I wish you would do a guy a favor."

"I've done lots of favors for lots of guys in many places."

"No hard feelings?"

Brennaman shook his head. "Of course not, Frank. It always makes me happy to turn down propositions."

IN the middle of the next block Brennaman saw Mrs. Rochambeau, broom in hand, come out of her old brownstone rooming-house and begin sweeping the front steps. Father Lassiter passed, tipped his hat, stopped, went up and took the broom from the frail old lady's hands. He made her sit down on the top step. When Tim got there, Father Lassiter was sweeping busily away.

"Penance for your sins, Father?"

The roly-poly little priest looked up and smiled with his whole face. "It's a poor figure of a priest, Tim, who can't take a bit of his own medicine." He assaulted the bottom step.

Mrs. Rochambeau pushed a strand of gray hair out of her faded old eyes. "The ring," she said, "you have found it, no?"

Tim shook his head.

"Ah, a pity," Mrs. Rochambeau declared. "That ring, it was, somehow, the center of everything. Of Rosanna's childhood, of her romance, almost of her very life among us. It was to be the motif of the wedding tonight, of the party afterward. There's no doubt of it, a devil is loose in our midst. What do you think, Father?"

The priest was a practical man. He stopped brushing dust from the sidewalk long enough to look at them sternly and say, "Has anyone thought of praying to Saint Anthony for help?"

Apparently, Mrs. Rochambeau had not even heard the question. With the privilege of age, she was thinking of something completely different.

"Do you remember Rosanna's eyes, Tim, as she ran about the neighborhood showing everybody her new ring? She was only twelve then—*mon Dieu*, already eight years ago!—and in love. In love and engaged! That look in her eyes made us all feel young again. We knew it was foolish, just children playing grown-up, a thing of the moment that she'd scarcely remember a year hence. Little girls always find heroes to love, and their happiness is real enough. So nobody laughed at her, everybody was happy with her—also, I think we were a little sorry for ourselves.

"But *le bon Dieu* knows how wrong we were. That light in her eyes was not a thing of the moment. After that day, there was never any question about it: she belonged to René, and René belonged to her. It was as simple as that, and as beautiful. We got used to the ring and stopped joking about it; gradually we came to accept its meaning literally, as Rosanna and René did."

Mrs. Rochambeau laughed. "You know, I have often thought: never was there a girl with so many mothers and fathers who were so completely wrong!"

"Well, René is a fine boy," Father Lassiter said as he swept. "Rosanna could have looked much longer and done much worse."

"Just think! In another few hours, at nine tonight, Rosanna—our beautiful little Rosanna—will be a married woman." She sighed. "I shall be there to weep with all the rest."

Father Lassiter snorted. "Sometimes," he complained to Tim, "weddings are worse than funerals."



Mrs. Rochambeau shook her head sadly. "But the ring—it would be perfect if only we had the ring—"

Tim walked to the end of his beat, opened the call-box and checked in at the precinct. The ring, always the ring! As if it were different from thousands being sold daily by five-and-ten-cent stores everywhere. Being sold now—

For two hours Tim Brennaman pounded his beat and wrestled with his conscience. Ghosts of a child Rosanna dogged each step of the way. There was the house where she had wept at her dying mother's bedside; here she had cradled in her arms the broken head of her drunken sot of a father after he had been knocked down by a fire-truck; there she had stood tearfully, holding her little brother by the hand, while Papa Schultz and Luigi and he were deciding that they would provide for the orphans themselves, that the State would never get them. Later, every mother and father in the neighborhood had insisted on their right to help.

Yes, there had to be a ring. For the people who loved her, who had come to regard it as evidence of their own affection, as well as René's, there had to be a ring.

What if it were not an exact duplicate? Who would notice, except Rosanna? Tim knew that she, realizing the necessity of his act, would never tell.

WITHOUT conscious decision, he turned off Brennaman's Beat and headed for a metropolitan shopping area six blocks away. It was his first dishonest act in nearly thirty years as a cop.

He remembered speaking briefly to Papa Schultz and Luigi and Father Lassiter as he passed them; he remembered turning a corner and entering a garish five-and-ten-cent store. He approached the jewelry counter.

The customer ahead of him was waiting for her package and her change. Tim studied the rings in the showcase. There was quite a selection.

The clerk came back, handed across a small paper bag, some change and said: "Thank you, miss." The girl turned and bumped into Tim.

They looked at each other in stunned silence. Finally Tim said: "With your grand new clothes on, I didn't recognize you, Rosanna."

The eyes that searched his were blue, worried, a little defiant; her voice was soft, tremulous. "I couldn't help it, Tim! I couldn't stand the things they were saying! I had to—do something!"

Tim felt a little proud of himself as he looked at her. Small but very capable, pretty but with character. And on his side! She'd had to do something.

*Illustrated by
Raymond Thayer*



Tim pounded up to them and ordered harshly: "Break it up!"

"Tim, they'll ruin everything, for themselves, for you! Even though I loved it, it was only a—a cheap little old ring!"

Tim asked: "What were you going to do with that?" He pointed at the paper bag.

"This ring? Why, put it through that crack in the windowsill."

"What crack?"

"The one Papa Schultz found last night. We were all there—Papa Schultz, Luigi, Mrs. Rochambeau and several others—cleaning the house and decorating it, when Papa Schultz found the crack in the board. It's not a big crack, and we weren't certain whether a ring would go through.

But we tried a sliver of wood about the size of a ring, and it did."

"Didn't you open the wall?"

"No. We just talked about it. Nobody seemed to want to. Besides, I wouldn't have let them. If we had opened the wall—and nothing was inside—"

Tears were in her eyes; she made a hopeless gesture with one small hand. "Tim, if only you hadn't come here when you did, if only you had let me hide this ring there, then call you—"

"Wait!" There was a tense, alert look in Brennaman's face. "Wait! After you put your ring on the windowsill, why couldn't the curtain, moving in a breeze, brush the ring through that crack?"

Rosanna's face brightened, her right hand caught Brennaman's and held it. "That's what happened! Oh, Tim, darling, don't you see?"

"Come on!"

With Rosanna's dark head under its pert blue hat bobbing at his shoulder, Tim hurried back to Brennaman's Beat. They climbed steps into Rosanna's house.

They were all there—Papa Schultz, Mrs. Rochambeau, Luigi, Father Lassiter—putting the finishing touches to the decorations. The rooms looked beautiful.

Tim announced: "Rosanna just told me about that crack in the windowsill. I'm opening the baseboard!"

Tools appeared, a crowbar, a hammer, a hatchet; and Tim set to work. It was an old house and old lumber. He pulled back the baseboard and looked inside the wall.

Somebody behind him gasped.

There were seven rings. All just alike, all brand new.

Tim swung around. In nearly thirty years as a cop, he had never before seen such looks of surprised guilt on so many faces at once.

Suddenly, Papa Schultz laughed. Luigi laughed. Father Lassiter and Madame Rochambeau laughed. Everybody laughed with great heartiness.

Except Tim. His throat felt too uncomfortable to laugh. He rose and walked wordlessly from the house.

SCHOOL was out now and a group of children attached itself to him.

A little girl asked: "Are you very old, Mr. Brennaman?"

A little boy said: "Of course he's old, Suzanna! Tim's forty, or maybe fifty even! My daddy says he's too old to be a cop. Do you eat grass, Tim, real grass?"

Suzanna asked: "Grass like in the park? Of course not, silly. Only horses and cows eat grass!"

All the children laughed; and the little boy, nettled, said: "I bet he does, too! My daddy says he does! My daddy says Tim should 'a' been put in a pasture years ago! Do you, Tim?"

The sound that came from Tim's throat was not intelligible speech. The children didn't notice, for another discussion arose.

A fair-haired child asked: "Did you catch the robber yet, Tim, who took Rosanna's ring?"

The little boy said: "Aw, it wasn't no robber. It was a gangster, and he had a tommy-gun. Two tommy-guns. Didn't he, Tim?"

"That ring was worth a million dollars, I betcha."

"Aw, it was not. It wasn't worth hardly nothin'. My daddy says so, and he knows. He says if they can't find the gangsters who took a two-bit ring, nothin' is safe down here any more; that's what he says. It was just a two-bit ring."

Brennaman ducked under the fringe of an awning on which was painted "Vicelli's Shoe Hospital" and turned

in. The children walked on. He nodded to Mamma Schultz, who was sitting barefoot in a wicker chair, and approached the counter opposite Vicelli. The place was dark and dirty; it smelled of leather and shoe sweat.

"I'm resigning," Tim said. "Tonight."

Vicelli studied Tim's face. It was sober, unsmiling, a little grim. He glanced quickly at Mamma Schultz, then back at Tim with an expression that held a momentary eager glint.

"What about—about the D.A.?"

Tim said: "You guess."

He turned. Mamma Schultz was on her feet. Her eyes stared round and blue at Tim; her jaw hung slack. She placed a fat hand on his tunic sleeve.

"Tim—Tim, did you say—did you say you're quitting, Tim?"

"Yes, Martha. Tonight. As soon as I go off duty."

As Brennaman left the shop, he heard Mamma Schultz crying to Vicelli: "Give me my shoes, Frank! Quick! Quick! You can fix them another day. Ach, those imbeciles!"

It was a bombshell. Within fifteen minutes the report had spread the entire length of Brennaman's Beat. People looked at Tim strangely as he passed, and spoke quietly, with conscious restraint; their words gave the impression of saying less than the speakers wanted to say. At this street-corner, at that doorstep, at the delica-

tessen, the café, little knots of his friends began to form.

As he again approached Vicelli's shoe-shop, he saw them standing at the door, waiting for him. Papa and Mamma Schultz, Luigi, Rosanna, Sol Abraham. He wished there were some way he could avoid this meeting, but he knew that sooner or later he had to face them.

Papa Schultz' tone invited a denial. "Mamma said you are leaving us, Tim."

Brennaman saw the anxiety in their faces, and his throat felt tight. He said: "Yes. That's right, Otto."

"Why?"

"It had to happen sometime."

Sol Abraham said: "That's no reason."

Brennaman glanced over their heads to where Vicelli was standing quietly. He said: "Maybe I'm tired. Maybe I'm too old for this job. Maybe you should have a younger, smarter man on this beat—"

Mamma Schultz' eyes flooded with tears. "But Tim—think!—it wouldn't be Brennaman's Beat any longer!"

"Rosanna told me about that crack in the windowsill. I'm opening the baseboard!" He set to work—looked inside the wall. . . . Somebody behind him gasped.



"No. It wouldn't. Might be a good thing, too. I've been thinking of all the dough I've cost you since I've been here. With a younger man, you might have had gambling-machines to pay your rent, a bookie on the corner, a numbers game—"

Several of them spoke at once. Luigi got the floor. "Are you craze, Tim? Nobody here wants-a that. We live here!"

Abraham said: "I think I poisonally circulate around a petition to recall the alderman."

"We don't want gambling down here! We won't stand for it!" Papa Schultz waved a fat fist. "If you quit and gambling comes, we all go to see the mayor, we tell the newspapers, we testify for the grand jury! Let them come!"

Mamma Schultz shook her head. "Tim knows how we feel about that. It is not why he is leaving. It's—it's—"

"The ring," Rosanna said. "We've all been acting like—like spoiled little children! We've been impatient over the loss of a trifle that really shouldn't matter; Tim has been eating his heart out with the feeling that he has failed us. But we all know he did everything that could be done."

"You can't resign, Tim. Don't you see? The person who stole the ring knew how the people of Brenneman's Beat would react; he knew what a blow it would be to you. Without danger to himself of arrest, he struck at you in a way that left you no defense. Why? He wants you out of the way, Tim, for some purpose of his own. And if you resign—don't you see?—you are playing right into his hands!"

The sharp logic of Rosanna's words stunned them into silence. She made her hands into small trembling fists.

"You can't resign, Tim! I won't let you! None of us will let you!"

Brenneman's mouth felt dry; his eyes stung. He forced words out.

"I will resign—unless the ring is returned to the windowsill by seven o'clock tonight."

Rosanna cried, "Oh, Tim!" and turned sobbing into Mamma Schultz's arms. Mamma said: "You're just a— a hard-headed old Irishman!"

But Luigi was looking at him oddly.

A Western Union boy pedaled up on a bicycle. "I've been looking all over for you, Rosanna," he said.

The message was short:

PLANE GROUNDED AT PHILLY UN-
ABLE CONTINUE DUE BAD WEATHER.
LOVE.

RENE.

"Everything—everything has gone wrong!" Rosanna wept.





"I saw you put it on the windowsill. I rang the doorbell, ran around the house, and lifted the ring while you were at the door."

"Maybe the weather will clear," Tim suggested. "Remember, it's bad luck to put off a wedding." But she would not be consoled.

THE next two hours were the longest Tim ever remembered. He walked his beat mechanically. In his ears echoed the sound of Rosanna's sobs. Maybe he was a "hard-headed old Irishman." Maybe he shouldn't have set a time-limit for the return of the ring. Maybe he had spoiled Rosanna's wedding after she, happy and excited and with a million things to do, had dropped it all to beg him to stay.

And what if the ring was not returned by seven o'clock?

By long-distance telephone he discussed the situation in some detail with his police-captain nephew. . . .

Brennaman shaded his eyes against the setting sun and very carefully selected an apple from the Little Gem Fruit Stand. He bit into it, found it tasteless. What if the ring was not returned? What if René did not arrive?

At six o'clock he checked in at the Fourth Precinct Station by phone and went off duty. The sun was sinking, and he felt cold and somehow alone. He didn't go home but walked slowly to the Palace Café and ate supper. It was dark when he left.

Tim was careful that no one saw him enter the alley. Picking his way among garbage-cans and shipping crates, he approached Rosanna's house from the rear. Lights were ablaze inside; the kitchen window was open, and radio music and excited conversation drifted out. It was just as if René had not told them his plane would not arrive in time. There was no ring on the windowsill.

He looked at his watch. Six-thirty. He settled himself behind a mound of empty orange-crates and waited.

Minutes passed. Once he thought he heard a noise over at his left. Rats,

probably. From where he crouched, he could see the window and both ways down the alley. The noise came again. It wasn't rats. The sound was distinctly that made by a person whose limbs were cramped and who was trying to flex them. Who?

He had just read 6:50 on the luminous dial of his watch when, looking up, he saw a shadow moving among darker shadows. Someone was approaching furtively through the alley.

The figure came closer, slipped silently along the house wall. A hand stretched out toward the lighted rectangle of the window, toward the sill.

Sound exploded from the packing cases to Tim's left. A voice shouted: "Hold-a your hand!" It was Luigi. He hurtled into the alley, then stopped abruptly, staring at the figure by the window. "Frank," he said, hoarsely. "Frank!"

Tim was on his feet. Suddenly the cobbler lunged at his brother, grappled with him. His arms went around Luigi's waist; one hand got tangled in a coat pocket. Amid the sound of ripping cloth, the brothers tumbled to the alley.

Tim pounded up to them and ordered harshly: "Break it up!" He lifted them almost bodily to their feet.

Luigi cried: "Frank, I never guessed it is you—you, my brother!—who stole Rosanna's ring!"

"You're crazy! I didn't steal anything!"

Tim said: "I'm searching you, Frank."

"Come right ahead."

Tim did a thorough job. But there was no ring.

Luigi's voice was relieved. "But Frank, what you mean, creeping up like a thief!"

"I was doing just what you were, Luigi. I wanted to see if the ring had been returned yet!"

Tim looked at his watch—6:57. His shoulders moved in a great, dejected shrug. His trap had failed. These

two well-meaning friends had blundered in, spoiling everything.

"No use watching any longer," he said. "Nobody's coming now, after all this hubbub. Let's go in."

They walked silently from the alley, around the corner and into the house.

Tension hit them like a blow. The radio was too loud; laughter was too high. Everybody was crowded into the living- and dining-rooms; there was no one in the kitchen. Not even a single face was turned that way.

They avoided looking at Tim except fleetingly. They were pretending that it was not one minute until seven.

Papa Schultz cried: "Think, Rosanna, how terrible it is for René, waiting now for the weather to change. But sooner or later, today or tomorrow, he will arrive. An hour afterward, you are an old married woman!" He went on stirring the punch-bowl on the dining-room table. "Like Mamma!" he added.

Rosanna smiled, but everyone knew it would not be the same.

Mamma Schultz poked him playfully in the side. "And for you, Jerry," she laughed at Rosanna's brother, "another man in the house to help you outvote your sister!"

Jerry started nervously. "What? Oh, René's a good guy. I like him."

The laughter and the conversation died abruptly as though turned off by a faucet. The bell of the clock on the sideboard began counting seven.

WHEN the last stroke had sounded, they could pretend no longer. Someone switched off the radio. Tim walked through the sharp silence into the kitchen to the window, and threw back the curtains. There was no ring. As he returned to the living-room, his eyes were on Luigi—on Luigi's coat pocket, torn down the forward edge.

He said, flatly: "Luigi, give Rosanna the ring."

Like an automaton, the barber lifted both hands and eased them into his

coat pockets. The expression on his dark, sensitive face altered slowly from surprise, to unbelief, to shock. His eyes grew watery.

Luigi's right fist rose from the pocket and moved out in front of him. The fist became a hand, and there in its palm was the ring. Rosanna's ring! There was no doubt of it this time.

Madame Rochambeau breathed: "Luigi, you rogue!"

He looked around the circle of faces and saw only accusation. His hand closed on the ring, he turned quickly and confronted his brother.

"Frank! You did this! You put Rosanna's ring there!" Luigi was crying now, and trembling with the violence of deep emotion. "Tell them, Frank, tell them you did this to me!"

His brother opened his mouth to speak, but could make only dry, choking sounds. Jerry stepped between them.

"Yes, Frank put the ring in your pocket, Luigi," Jerry said. "He knew he'd be searched, and had to get rid of it. But he didn't steal it."

Rosanna's voice sounded weak, oddly afraid. "But who—who—"

Jerry said: "I took your ring, Rosanna."

"Oh, Jerry!"

"It was the only way I knew to get it. So when I saw you put it on the windowsill that night, I went outside, rang the doorbell, ran around the

house and lifted the ring while you were at the front door."

Rosanna walked over to him, caught his coat lapels and shook them. "Jerry! You couldn't possibly want my ring! Who put you up to this? Who?"

He looked at her. He said: "René." A slap in the face would have hurt her less. Her knuckles were white and tense against her lips. "René—René told you to—to steal my ring?"

"He wrote me. He said to get the ring, no matter how. He didn't know what a fuss it would make. After I got it, I needed advice. I figured the ring meant less to Frank than to most of the neighbors, so I went to him. Then Tim began turning pressure on Frank and started all this business about resigning unless the ring was returned by seven o'clock. Frank got scared and made me give him the ring to put back. I hope René isn't sore."

Rosanna's cheeks were wet. She said in a choked voice: "But—René—stealing our ring!"

Her words were almost lost as the insistent whine of a police-car siren grew louder, closer. Papa Schultz ran to the door and looked out.

"They're stopping here!" he shouted.

Others crowded behind him and suddenly everyone was laughing and slapping his neighbor on the back, yelling into his ear:

"It's René! He's here! René is here!"

The boy, clad in the green uniform of a Marine Corps sergeant, pushed his way good-naturedly through the jam

at the door and caught Rosanna up in his arms. Their friends smiled approvingly at the length and fervor of their kiss.

"I'd never have made it," René said at last, "if Tim hadn't called a police captain at Philly. He picked me up at the airport and we raced—eighty miles an hour!—all the way here!"

The police captain had followed René in. He walked over to Brennaman and held out his hand.

"Hello, Uncle Timothy," he said. "I spoke to the commissioner, as you told me to, and he said this trip 'would finally square' him. For what?"

Brennaman smiled. "Oh, for a little favor I did him many years ago. It wouldn't concern you."

Rosanna frowned up at René. "I could shake you! Getting Jerry to take my ring—"

René's face colored. "I—I didn't know exactly how to do it. I just sent him some money and—well, I thought I would surprise you and everybody, and you would be pleased when—"

He asked for the ring, took it from Luigi and placed it tenderly on Rosanna's finger.

"Look, Rosanna," he said.

Everybody moved forward and stared down at it. A sob caught in Rosanna's throat. "Oh, René, you idiot! You precious, darling idiot!"

Mamma Schultz and Madame Rochambeau were crying unashamedly. Papa Schultz had a sudden attack of coughing. Tim Brennaman was feeling younger by the second.

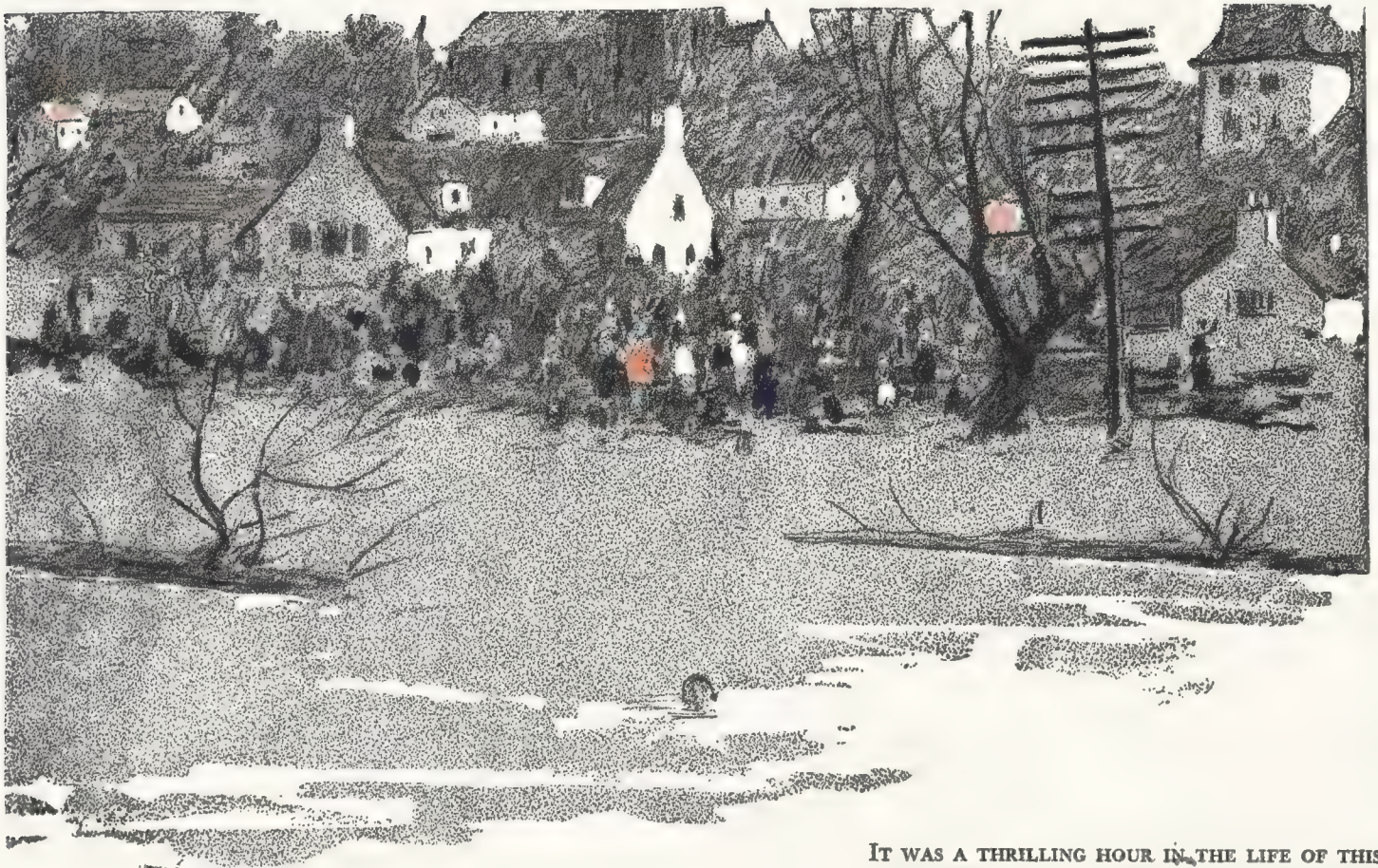
It was a very little diamond, but it winked up bravely at them all.

Mamma said: "You're just a hard-headed old Irishman!"





The young girl wailed piercingly: "Help, oh, help my poor, unfortunate mother! Help, help, oh, please help my poor, unfortunate mother!" And the woman let out her locomotive-lost-in-the-night whistle as the river rose perceptibly.



IT WAS A THRILLING HOUR IN THE LIFE OF THIS BOY WHEN HE WAS TAKEN ABOARD THE RESCUE BOAT THAT ACTUALLY ROWED INTO THE CHURCH.

Taken at the Flood

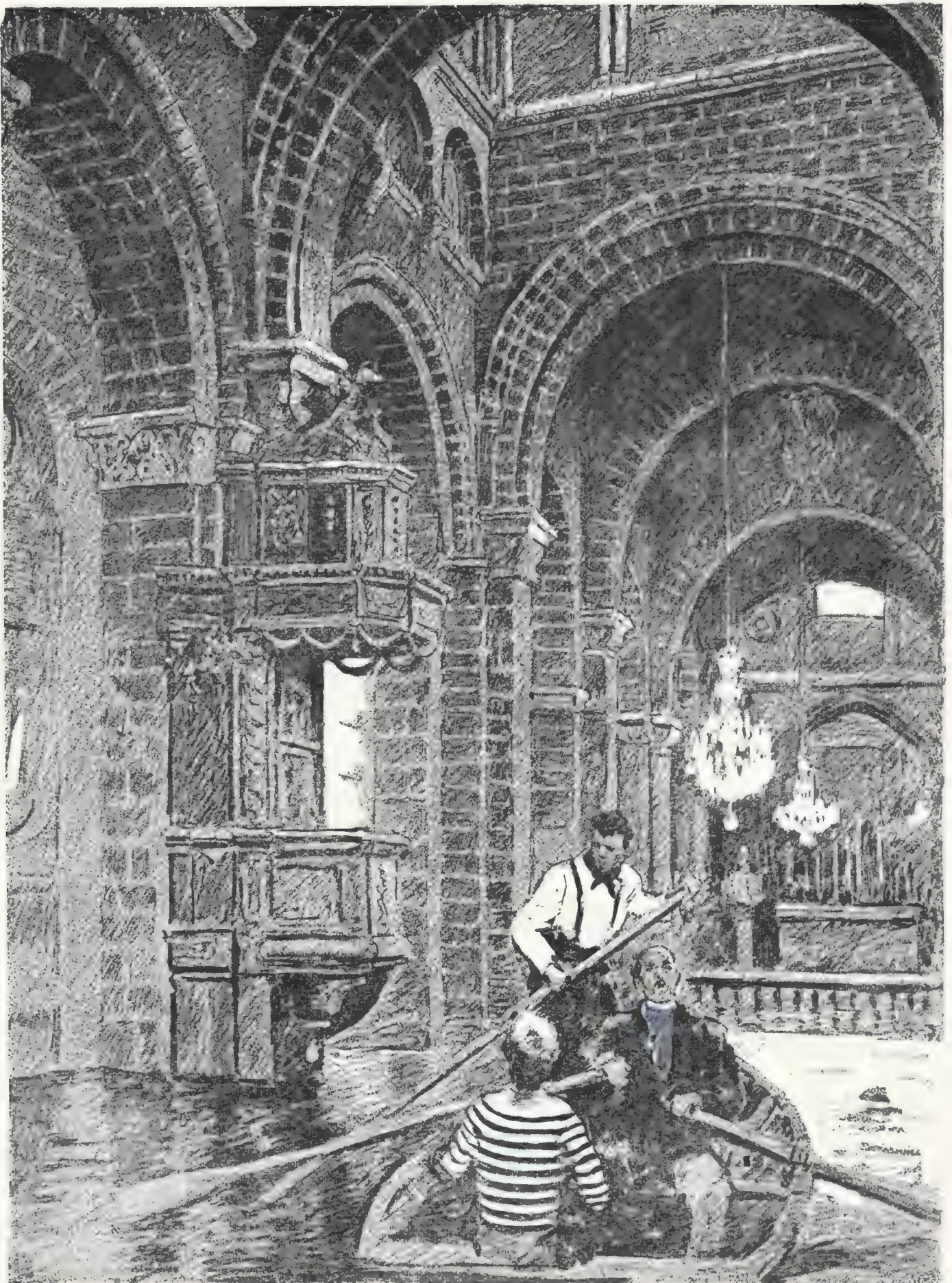
by GEORGES SURDEZ

VERY early in life, I was forced to the conclusion that human beings did not behave according to the logic they expressed in words. For instance, I discovered that the same causes did not necessarily produce the same effects, that the importance of a broken window, the smashing of a glass, the need for a drink, the telling of a lie, were judged according to an extremely erratic and somehow mysterious scale existing somewhere in the minds of my parents. I believed that to be a family peculiarity until I was sent to school and saw the evidence of the same unsteadiness in teachers. And the older I became, the more ill-balanced the world became, until, at the age of ten, I ceased seeking to understand, when I saw an entire city of sixty thousand souls tem-

porarily abandon its standards and plunge into sentimental waste.

It must be made clear that the circumstances were abnormal. There was a flood, possibly the worst flood on record. The muffled muttering of the Doubs River had become a tremendous roar. Even from where we lived, away up a hill, you could hear it when you awoke during the night, and you knew that the brown and yellow monster was swelling, swelling, each passing hour. To the inhabitants of the Eastern France city of Bezanval, the Doubs River was a personality and no one smiled when a small child, crossing a bridge, stared at the turbulent racing surface slithering furiously not far from the top of the ancient stone arches, and exclaimed loudly: "Oh, look, Mamma, the Doubs is angry!"

The Doubs was angry. Normally, the river ran huddled deep and quiet between two high masonry embankments, between broad quays on which plodded the sleek, powerful horses towing the barges. The Doubs then was a placid, docile, patient stream. But the thaw had come suddenly that year and the ice of the remote Alpine glaciers, the winter snows of the Jura Mountains, had gathered and were charging into the valleys like a ferocious dragon. The quays had been submerged, they vanished, the water rolled and roared almost flush with the stone copings, and where jams occurred, mostly near bridges, it spilled over. Out in the country, where nothing restrained the river, the flood was widening day after day, shooting separate columns along various routes to invade our city, oozing in where it



I spent several hours a day floating through the town, a guide on a rescue boat. If you have never floated into a big church on a boat, you have missed a lot—the flickering lights, the muffled sounds.

could not crash. The mighty waters were attacking by pushing through the sewers, spouting into cellars.

The whole lower town was covered one story deep and there was no sign of a stop. The bridges were mined, ready to be blown up when the water rose beyond a certain level. It seems there were engineering reasons for this precaution. The bridges were under military guard, circulation was restricted. There was an atmosphere of impending catastrophe, which was everywhere—for example, although usually the calm river reflected the blue of the sky, the sky now was tinged with the muddy brown of the river, and appeared soggy as an old sponge.

Most small boys delight in an atmosphere of tenseness and excitement and I was not the exception. My parents did not understand this, of course, and that led to long arguments. I pointed out that there was really much less chance of my being drowned than normally existed, because of the number of guards mobilized, a whole regiment of infantry, half a regiment of artillery, a full battalion of engineers, not to mention the national gendarmes, the city police, the firemen and the emergency civilian volunteers. I indicated and listed the many things that one could see in this emergency, all valuable to a child's education. Perhaps I did not convince them, but they could not very well chain me.

"Oh, let him do as he likes," my father surrendered wearily. "The guards will keep him from going very far."

He was wrong. All you needed to get by the guards at the bridges was imagination. You had to give some story to the sentries, that you lived on the opposite side or were on an important errand. I therefore took an old box of pills from a drawer, wrapped it in the original paper, and that box served me as a ticket and a passport:

"THIS is medicine for my aunt. She lives on the Rue du Loiret, Number 44, third floor—"

Even if I bumped into a skeptical city policeman who knew the house, I had the dope. My little package grew shabbier day by day, and I became familiar to the guards on Jacquemard Bridge. They either figured that my poor old aunt was a chronic sufferer or that it did not matter. They even allowed me to linger in the center of the bridge, hunched over the rail. The spectacle was magnificent, swift in pace and ever changing.

Everything came tearing down on that stream. There were whole trees, branches, trunks, roots, hewn logs, furniture, crates, barrels, kegs, planks,

at times a whole roof, torn from a barn or a sty. There were umbrellas, man-gers, bales of fodder, everything. When they jammed up against the bridge, the engineers would come and work away with long poles and axes, and water would swirl up and lick at your feet. You could see plenty of dead animals, too, an occasional cow, pigs, sheep, dogs—a lot of dogs. Once in a while, there were dead people, too, whirling down with the rest, but very few of them, for as soon as a body was reported, people were sent to catch it.

FEW boys tried the main bridge in the center of town, supposedly the toughest to cross. A small boy can be very useful to a group of soldiers on duty, running for tobacco, for wine, for a newspaper. Before long, I had made friends with a number of soldiers. Then it turned out that many of the soldiers did not know the city well, needed a guide. I offered my services, and from then on spent several hours a day floating through the streets, on a rescue boat manned by engineers.

It was as interesting to float around Bezanval as around Venice. It was an incomparable experience in many ways. I was accustomed to viewing the streets from my own height, and the change in perspective, the masking of shops and familiar landmarks, turned the familiar streets into a fascinating maze, so mysterious, so charming, that you felt as if you were dreaming wide awake. You might pass a sign at the level with your eyes as you sat in the boat and recognize the name and business, written in big gold letters on a black or scarlet board. That would let you know precisely where you were and you would realize, with a start, that the metal bulge and spike was nothing more than the newspaper kiosk.

There was one awkward rule: Anything floating that you happened to retrieve had to be turned over to the police—anything! Rumor had it that if you kept anything, you were liable to be shot as a looter. And you realized how many interesting items could float out of shops and homes, and how very few of them were small enough to be fished out quietly and concealed under your smock. It was no secret that there was an exception to this law: Gendarmes, policemen, firemen, soldiers and even volunteers fished in cellars for kegs and bottles, and *those* were not turned in.

I did not have to attend school during the flood, because our building was flooded up to the first story. I am sure of that, because I floated around the yard, and even plucked leaves from the protruding trees. Our rescue boat had no business in the school courtyard, but when I explained matters

to the soldiers, they readily consented to the excursion, remembering how happy they would have been, some years before, at seeing a flooded school-house.

We had several exciting moments on those trips, a few rescues and salvages. Once or twice, some chance current whirled us toward the main stream. Boats were soon upset or crushed there. It was sport to see those big guys grow agitated, drop the poles and grab for the oars. They swore and sweated then. They said I was brave, but the fact was that I did not worry at all—all the time, I remembered I was in the boat, so nothing could happen to us, and our gang would win out, avert danger at the last moment. When you cease to believe that, age is setting in.

I liked the flood and hoped it would last a long time, and I believe quite a few people shared that hope. There was no suffering from hunger and thirst in our city, probably less than usual, for much food was brought in and distributed free. There were places where, just by standing in line, you could get a bowl of soup and a hunk of bread. I only tried that once, because the soup did not compare with my mother's, and the bread was stale and damp. People had been warned not to use the water from the public fountains, and only a part of the population had water on taps at home from the reservoir. Wine sold very cheaply at the time, as low as a couple of sous a quart, and it was discovered that the cost of transporting fresh water was about the same. So some organization found it easier to supply ordinary wine. There was no danger of famine, because the catastrophe was regional, and the railway ran along the high ridges. Even the Paris papers came, and I recall reading with a thrill about *les sinistrés de l'Est*, realizing that I was, in a way, one of those sinistrés of the East.

MORE houses had to be evacuated every day as the flood kept gaining. I had become part of the gang at the bridge and common experiences had welded us close. If you have never floated into a big church on a boat, under the echoing vault, you have missed a lot. Somebody kept the tapers lighted. In the semi-darkness, you could see those lights flicker away and sink deep in the dark surface. And when you sang or shouted, the sounds would be all distorted and queer, muffled and ringing at the same time. Once, our boat got a call from somebody in an old house, and one of the soldiers got a little rifle and a lot of cartridges, and we moored the boat outside a window and shot inside at a colony of rats. The fellows let me have four shots, for which I am still grateful.

Then, early one afternoon, my gang got another call, to go to a certain spot, pick up some material, and rush it, by boat and on foot, to a given location. We skimmed through the streets with poles a-flying, landed and trotted to a depot, where the engineers of my crew were met by four other men of the same battalion, carrying coils of rope, long hooks and other instruments.

We returned to the boat, proceeded through other streets for some distance and landed again.

A considerable part of the population had stopped working, because shops and factories were flooded, so there were many idlers. And most of them seemed crowded around this spot, hundreds and thousands of them, although how some of them had reached it without boats was beyond me. It was three or four miles upstream from my bridge, almost out of the city proper. There, the river was as wide as a lake, and racing furiously in the center. In ordinary times, there was a little waterfall there, but it was completely covered now.

IN the middle of the rushing stream was a small island—sometimes used as a picnic place in summer. A dozen poplar trees grew on that island, nice, sturdy trees. Some had been pulled out, but several still stood. And there was the red tile roof of the little inn jutting in sight. And on that roof were four people, a woman and three children.

And those four were what the mob was gaping at, what the soldiers, the gendarmes, the police, the firemen, were staring at. The distance was not great; I could identify those four with ease—Eudoxie Mievre and her brats. I knew a lot about her, as who didn't in our city! She lived in a small shack right next to a sawmill, and people had long said that she should have been locked up as insane and her kids placed in institutions.

So far as looks went, she was not bad looking, a tall, slim, blonde woman, around thirty. You might even say she was beautiful, if you didn't mind her vacant stare, and her set, idiotic smile. She was not all there in the head, as everyone knew. Well, her mother had been a lot like her and her father had been an alcoholic. Some said she was married to somebody, some said she was not. But all agreed it was a shame the way she neglected her children for days and nights at a time, when some fancy caught her.

The welfare people would step in occasionally, and try to get the children away. But she was the mother, legally sane and it seemed that a whole lot of fuss would be needed to ride over her protests. Most of the time, the kids were underfed, sickly, with

scabs and even vermin. The one of school age, a girl, did not attend school much. She was thirteen, and people said she was just like her mother, which was no compliment.

The two boys I thought sort of cute, little white-haired things, one eight, and looking five, one about four. They were reputed dull; the one who was eight could not be permitted in school, because nothing could make the boy control himself in any way whatever.

While they were not very bright, they certainly realized now that they were in a bad spot. The mother did not cry out for help in words, but every few minutes she would let loose a single, shrill shriek, that made your teeth feel as if you'd passed a rasp over them. The young girl, from habit, from training, did not ask help for herself. Instead she wailed, piercingly:

"Help, oh, help my poor, unfortunate mother! Help, help, oh, please help, my poor, unfortunate mother!"

And the two kids yelled: "Mamma, Mamma, Mamma!"

There were planks stretched over the quieter flooded area, almost to where the stone embankment would be, under the surface. Those planks linked jutting little islands, stout trees, roofs. I was carrying a bucket with some tools in it—I never knew what they were, so nobody stopped my following my party. I felt that I was the envy of other boys and when I came to a stop on an improvised platform, I laid down the bucket and placed my hands on my hips. There were firemen and engineers all around, some of them officers.

"How the devil did they get out there?" a captain asked. And anyone could tell he had asked that question before.

A stout cop replied: "They live upstream a ways. Probably, the woman tried to get away in a rowboat, the boat was smashed on the island, and she just lived inside the house until, today, the water rose enough to force them all on the roof."

"I'm for manning a good, solid boat and—" said a lieutenant of firemen. He had a fine, resolute red face and yellow whiskers.

"You've said it before," the captain retorted; "but no boat could last two minutes in that current. Too many trees and stuff. I don't want any drowning, you see."

"But we can't leave them there," the other insisted.

"I'm not going to leave them there," the captain said, impatiently: "that is why I sent for more rope." He indicated a tree on the island, a tree on our side: "We must put a rope over that stretch, that's the only way." He consulted one of his aides: "Any volunteers as yet?"

"They're all willing, Captain. But I don't know whether we can find anyone able to negotiate that stretch. It's quite short, but the current is so strong. There are swimmers who can—"

"I know—who can swim across the Channel," the captain snapped. "But this is Bezanval, and our means are somewhat limited. And"—his irony was flashing dangerously—"if you care to wire Paris for one, you have my permission. What is needed is a man who can swim, who is on the spot now, and willing to try—"

"I repeat, Captain, that everyone of my men who can swim has declared himself eager—"

"Don't exaggerate. Willing will do."

"Berdeau, Berdeau!" shouted the other. As a tall soldier started over the planks, I could hear the murmur of the crowd: "He's the guy who'll swim it—they say he's wonderful."

Berdeau came before the captain, saluted. He was perhaps twenty-two, very big, with a bony, aquiline face and close-set gray eyes. His face was serious, but he did not look scared.

"You're willing to try it, Berdeau?"

"Yes, Captain."

"You understand it isn't an order? That only you here can know how well you swim, really?"

"I can swim," Berdeau replied with a faint smile. "Don't worry about that, *mon capitaine*."

"I won't. Go ahead."

Private Berdeau of the engineers undressed right there. He placed his heavy shoes, I noticed, a little aside from the clothing, until he stood clad only in his Army underwear, with long sleeves and long legs, and his kepi. This he deposited, with a little flourish of bravado, squarely on top of the pile. He lowered himself into the murky water, ducked in over his head to get the feel of it, rose, spat and waded toward the river. He lost footing after sixty or seventy feet and already you could see that the current was pulling at him as he took his first strokes.

CAREFUL with that rope," the engineer captain ordered the group handling the line. "Don't pull at him, but don't give it much slack—"

"Served my time with the Navy, Captain," one of the men, a fireman, replied in a grumbling tone: "But I can tell you something right now, even if I'm no captain and no engineer, and that's—"

"My friend," the officer said testily, "'tend to your job, I'll 'tend to mine."

"Just the same, in the Navy—"

"You'd send out a dreadnought. I know. Watch your job."

Berdeau had now reached the main stream and was swimming on resolutely. Out on the roof, the three



No one smiled when a child stared at the turbulent surface slithering furiously not far from the top of the ancient stone arches, and exclaimed loudly: "Oh, look, Mamma, the Doubs is angry!"

kids had quieted down, to watch, but the woman let out her locomotive-lost-in-the-night whistle at the same intervals. Then the men holding the line were almost jerked off their feet, staggered, swore. The rope had snagged on something heavy speeding downstream. They managed to clear it, but over there, Berdeau had been ducked.

"I've read about a special apparatus that shoots a line to—" the lieutenant of firemen started.

"So have I," the engineer officer retorted with smooth sarcasm. "I have sent to the nearest Coast-guard Station for a gun of that type, and it should arrive inside the next fortnight. Watch that line!"

"Won't do any good to watch it," the ex-sailor grunted. "Whatever happens along will snag it and that's what I wanted to tell you. We should man a boat and—"

"And make me responsible for five or six more lives, eh?" The engineer officer was growing angry, and he indicated a city official, round, sleek and fiftyish, standing nearby: "If Monsieur cares to shoulder the responsibility, I have no more objections."

"I'm a mercer by trade, Captain," the other retorted, "and certainly will not intrude when there is a technician on the job."

"You flatter me, monsieur. Oh, I wish someone would tell that woman her yelling is unnecessary—"

"No use trying, Captain. She hasn't all her good sense."

"A local epidemic," the other muttered. "Oh, he's not making headway, is he? We need someone who can do better than hold his own against the river. Oh—ah—ah—"

THE mob lining the edge of the flooded area yielded to an enormous moan: After ducking under a large piece of timber, Private Berdeau failed to reappear. And the line was tight. Reluctantly, the officer gave the signal to haul in, and it took strength and time, but at last Berdeau was dragged close, two men in high boots waded out and brought him to the planking. He had changed much in those few minutes, looked years older. His elbows, his knees, were scratched and bleeding, the rope had left marks on the skin of his torso. He retched and threw up water. Then he sat up, sketched a vague salute upward. With despair in his eyes, he allowed vanity to move his lips:

"Ready for the next try, Captain."

"Thank you, my friend, but you must not strain yourself. Next volunteer—"

Another man tried, another, and a fourth. The actual distance to be covered was very short when measured in yards, but the river was an enor-



*Illustrated by
Maurice Bower*

mous spout; it simply was mathematically impossible for a man to cover the distance before being swept out of reach. The flow of debris down the stream was not constant, there were periods of two, three minutes, when nothing went by, nothing of any size, and the torrent rushed on like brown glass striated with sparkling streaks, where the pale sun, the flood-sun, caught. When there was no swimmer in the river, hence no entertainment, the kids would howl in sympathy with their mother, and the girl would resume: "Please help my poor, unfortunate mother! Oh, help my poor, unfortunate mother—"

Away off, on the other edge of the flood, dark groups of spectators moved. There were spectators on the hills, too, and those remote witnesses had glasses, you could tell by the reflections. Eudoxie Mievre was the center of attention, she and her lousy, neglected offspring! For that moment, and for a period of hours, she was the most important person in the city. And the game was growing interesting, because, even in those hours, the river had risen perceptibly, and another poplar tree had gone.

"Help, oh, help my poor unfortunate mother!"

"Mamma, Mamma, Mamma!"

The engineer officer was red and baffled, humiliated by his failure before so many people. Some of the firemen were grumbling audibly about people who came out of Polytechnic School and could not handle anything so simple. Suggestions that a string be shot onto the island somehow, tied to an arrow, for instance, were made. But not one of the four out there would be able to fasten the rope properly, even if they hauled one in. It was suggested that some man might start far upstream and float down onto the island, or rather, the roof. And men constantly suggested using a boat.

I sat on the platform, gnawing an Army biscuit—which is a small brick made of flour—unnoticed, tolerated, and dreaming big dreams: I stepped forward, stripped, had the rope tied on to me, and due to my expert use

of my lesser strength, passed where mighty men had failed. I ducked and dodged debris, hoisted myself on that roof, turned and nodded at the crowd. "Nothing to it!" . . . Only the fact that I could not swim prevented me from volunteering. But, I mused, wouldn't it be wonderful to come forth now and achieve what those guys had tried to do?

To my dismay, somebody appeared unexpectedly to do just that. His name was Alphonse Guichroul, and when he elected to work, he was a stone mason. He did not work much, because his wife hired out as a char and his two older kids, boys, were working. He drank and caroused on their earnings. He had been in the jug any number of times, for public drunkenness, nocturnal disorderliness, wife-beating, child-beating, small pilfering, insults addressed to and resistance offered to agents of the law.

Nevertheless, he enjoyed a certain reputation for recklessness and was admired by many. He was the Lancelot of the bistros, tolerating no interference. He beat his children hard and often, but when a master struck his ten-year-old son, he came to school. I was lucky enough to be not merely in the school, but in the class when he rushed in. He mauled the master a bit, spanked him. The cops had



"Strangely enough," the captain explained, smiling hard, "I've thought of that very thing, my friend. But just where are you going to start?"

been sent for and arrested him as soon as his rage was spent. They locked him up, and he was docile enough until dinner time, when he wanted spaghetti instead of stew. He then broke down the door of his cell, pushed the cops around and walked out. That all sounds very fantastic, but it was in the newspapers. They'd put Alphonse away for four months after that stunt.

Now, he arrived smoking a cigarette, clad in thin cotton pants, sockless feet in canvas sandals, a worn,

faded blue jersey hanging over one arm. He flicked the peak of his old cap to the captain of engineers.

"They tell me you want somebody to take a rope over there," he said, casually jerking his chin up at the flooded island with its tragic, howling group. "I'll do it for you."

"Oh, you will? Thank you."

"I'm not kidding," the man stated calmly. "I'm Guicheroul."

"Think you can do it?"

"What did I just tell you?" Alphonse shrugged. "All you need is

common sense. Your guys have started straight across, instead of coming down with the current."

"Strangely enough," the captain explained, smiling hard, "I've thought of that very thing, my friend. But just where are you going to start from? There's no possible starting-place any nearer than a half-mile, and we haven't that much rope. String would snap. Further, rope gets heavier with each additional meter."

"You technical guys look for complications and would manage to drown

in a bird-bath," Alphonse grumbled. "Suppose we cut out the conversation and get to business?"

"I'm all for that, my friend."

Alphonse started to strip. Although he had a son almost fifteen, Alphonse was not a middle-aged man for he had married at sixteen. He was in his early thirties, a short, stocky man, almost as wide as high, but all bone and muscle. In a tough way, he was handsome, with blunt features, very fair skin, blue eyes and a rounded skull covered with a shock of blond hair. In three seconds, he had shed everything except the bottom part of his underwear, looking like flannel tights studded with mother-of-pearl buttons.

Behind, on firm land, the crowd had identified the mighty Alphonse, and a clamor lifted: "Go to it, Phonphonse!" mingled with jeers against the officials and soldiers. "Show the saps up, show the saps up!"

ALPHONSE half-turned, waved carelessly. "Don't worry, boys," he seemed to say. He took a few puffs at the remnant of cigarette, spat it out, trotted forward four steps and took off in a classic dive. Then, to everyone's surprise, instead of heading straight for the river, he started to swim upstream, but in the relatively smooth stretch of flood water flanking the main current. He used the breast-stroke—as practically everyone did in France at that time. He resembled a giant pink-and-scarlet frog.

"Eh-eh," the city official said, pride flushing his tones as he looked at the captain, "he seems to have a notion there."

"Yes, simple," the other nodded, "but it had to be thought of."

Some distance away, Alphonse edged toward the main stream in soft, lazy strokes, his head turned this way and that. He was waiting for one of those moments when the rushing surface would be almost clear of large, dangerous debris. While the others had plunged in, gritted their teeth and gone forth to do or die, Alphonse was most deliberate, and somehow seemed more than a bit scornful, as if he were doing a simple task for the entertainment of the crowd. Just how a man can manage to be arrogant with only his head emerging above muddy water is impossible to explain, but Alphonse did appear arrogant.

When he made up his mind that he had a chance, he was off with amazing velocity. The current caught him, all right, tore at him, pushed him, overwhelmed him at times, but that gleaming head kept bobbing up a yard or two nearer the goal. It soon was evident that his calculations had been correct, because the forward progress and the drift coincided near the red roof.

"Go to it, Phonphonse, go to it!" the crowd roared. "Bravo, go to it! Bravo!"

"Alphonse, it's Alphonse!" the voice of the girl rose clear and sharp above the tumult of the river. And, a miracle, for the first time the half-mad woman's scream finally became coherent: "Help, Alphonse, help!" Obviously, Alphonse was well and honorably known to the stranded party!

Such a performance defied resentment, and I heard the captain howl, between cupped hands: "Go to it, go to it!"

Alphonse was an artist—he permitted himself to be whirled down beside the roof almost to the end, and a groan started to lift from thousands of chests. At the last moment, his arm flashed out and his hand caught hold of the tin gutter. Then the pale sun glistened on his streaming head and shoulders, as he heaved himself onto the tiles. He did not even take the trouble to wave, but started hauling in the rope.

The rest was very interesting, but somehow an anticlimax, a mechanical exhibition devoid of emotion and thrill. In less than one hour, everyone was safe on dry land. . . .

It was then that I witnessed a strange spectacle: The crowd went wild; they cheered, shouted. Women hugged Eudoxie and her children, petted and patted them, fought to receive them as guests! On our planking, Alphonse was not permitted to dress for several minutes, because everyone wanted to shake his hand and congratulate him. I was stunned when I saw his natural enemies, the town cops, push toward him with the rest, embrace him with magnificent disregard for possible damage by water to their good uniforms! He walked back to town in the middle of an excited procession, and prosperous citizens struck matches when he wanted to light a cigarette.

I was immensely puzzled by the public reaction: After all, if one applied pure logic, what had happened? The city's most notorious brawler had proved himself a good swimmer and had rescued four beings who were considered a disgrace to the city and a burden on the community. Alphonse's sudden popularity—that I could understand, he had done something unusual, all the more remarkable because nothing unselfish or noble was expected of him. But the rescued family?

They had done nothing save get themselves into serious danger by a lack of intelligence and much carelessness—a wise woman would have taken her kids overland, not risked the furious river. But they were treated like celebrities. Gifts were showered upon them, dresses, shoes, toys. Prosperous families boasted of

having entertained the lot at dinner. The local papers had lengthy, exciting accounts of the rescue and editorials praising everyone concerned.

"What's all the fussing about, Papa?" I asked Father.

"Four lives saved," he told me, his eyes filming with emotion. "Four humble lives. A poor woman and her three innocent children. That is beautiful, you know."

"Why, Papa?" I pressed. "Lots of people said Eudoxie should be put in the bughouse and the kids in institutions. I've heard women say that kids like that shouldn't be allowed to grow up to become public charges, as they'll all grow up to be nuts."

"That's why it is beautiful," Father explained patiently: "It's the concern of humanity for life, even the life of the most unfortunate—"

"Like I was reading about the Arabs respecting mad folks and protecting them from harm?" I was trying to understand. "Is that it, Papa?"

"Yes. Well, not exactly. Ask your master at school; it's his job to instruct you."

The flood subsided in due time, the river settled back at the normal level, between the broad quays, quiet as a drunkard on a Tuesday morning. People went back to the shops and factories, the schools opened once more, the bridges were unguarded, you could no longer enter a church in a rowboat. The city of Bezanval had become sane again.

BY the time summer had come, Eudoxie had sold the accumulated presents for strong drink, and wandered about with her beautiful face blank and her eyes alive and questioning. Her young daughter was in the hospital because of an infectious disease. The two little boys were back at their idiotic play in the filth piled around another plank shack, pausing only to drool and scratch. That family, too, had gone back to the old order.

Alphonse? There had been talk of obtaining the life-saving medal for him, but consultation of his record had stopped the award. And that fall, while in a state of drunkenness, he resisted arrest and was unlucky enough to hurt a policeman. He went to prison for three years that time, and many of the people who had cheered him on his day of glory averted their eyes or sneered when he crossed the street, between two gendarmes.

But what puzzles me now is that Father was right, must have been right, for when I think of that brown torrent rushing under the spongy sky, of the shores black with yelling people, of the rescue, I feel that there was something inspiring and beautiful in the whole business. I feel it strongly, although I could not explain why.

Nobody Kicks Andy

Wherein a midget-car race-driver
pinch-hits as a fire-diver—and an
exciting time is enjoyed by all.

by RICHARD
HOWELLS WATKINS

PETE BLACK stuck his head out the window of his old sedan and glanced backward. Riding safely behind at the end of the tow-bar was the midget racing car, robin's-egg blue and as neat as a Swiss watch. Maybe the sixty cents for that last can of touch-up enamel had left Pete a little hungry, but the sheen of the midget was as satisfying as three hamburgers and three cups of coffee. A hot iron in any doodlebug company, that little job!

Pete grinned at placid Andy Searle, resting on his spine beside him, and pointed ahead at the gate leading into Bradbury fairgrounds.

"The gateway to fame an' fortune, like the fellow said," Pete Black told Andy.

"It sho' is," Andy agreed politely.

In silence they drove past the gate-keeper.

"Looks like they grossin' big," Andy said, heaving himself up and looking around at the crowds with kindling eyes.

"And so will we gross big," Pete Black said stoutly. "I've showed you the scars to prove I'm no race-driver myself, Andy; but how that little job perks tonight will show you I am a mechanic."

He nodded his head. "And more important that that, even, I'll prove



*"Come down off that
ladder, you yellow—"
"No!" said Pete. "I'm
all right. I just fall off."*

I'm a good manager for you—if I am bran' new at it."

Not many people would figure that mild Andy Searle rated a good manager or a good iron. But Pete had seen Andy drive an old clunk against much hotter cars, and gain on them where gaining was toughest—on the curves. A guy like that was entitled to a fair shot at the midget title.

Pete scowled. "You been kicked around in carnivals, death-driving, risking your neck and all, because you're too good-natured, kid. But with me managing you, nobody gets to kick you round any more. You got the reaction-time to go places in the doodlebug business, and I'm going to see you get the breaks."

Andy Searle smiled hopefully but looked a trifle mystified. "That's right good of you, Pete, but I don't know's folks have kicked me round."

"You don't know it because off a track you're easy-going, Andy."

"Folks are mighty nice to me, mostly. Never starved yet." Andy became thoughtful. He added: "Though I could eat a bite now."

Pete's own stomach seconded the motion.

"And you're going to eat," Pete said stoutly, "soon's I run into some guy. I've staked plenty. And though I spent a little too much on the job—"

"Well! Look!" Andy Searle was revolving his neck with more animation than Pete had noticed in him before. "They have a human cannonball and a fish-diver, too, as crowd-catchers."

"Don't you go getting homesick on me for the carnival stuff," Pete said uneasily. He figured the metal music, the gawking crowds, the barking for dimes, all the action Andy'd been raised in, was working on him.

He whacked Andy on the knee. "Whatever they got, the doodles to-night are high. And in them, boy, you'll be headman. You got the zip."

BUT Andy was sticking half out the window to run his eyes up the narrow, swaying ladder leading to the fire-diver's platform. The sight of that perch, seemingly just this side of heaven, raised cold bumps on Pete Black, with all the dizzy rungs leading up to it.

"It's Tony Dorio's rig," Andy said as they detoured around the midway. "You sho' got to give that boy credit. I've seen him work on nights when the temperature wasn't above fo'ty-five degrees. And the water no warmer. Regular Eskimo."

"Huh!" said Pete Black. He looked Andy over. But Andy wasn't kidding. He was handing it to this Tony Dorio on temperature, not altitude.

"I had to quit that game myself," Andy said. He sounded sad. "Seemed like it was always freezin' weather when I worked, even down in Geo'gia. It gave me head colds."

"Huh!" said Pete again. "It'd give me broken backs."

Pete drove on past the midget track, a fifth-of-a-mile saucer in the infield of the half-mile circuit where the hay-burners used to trot. He headed

toward a low row of sheds way off that hadn't been used much since Bradbury fair had quit harness racing. Like all mechas, Pete still wanted to work a bit on the mill, and he wanted no crowd breathing past his ears when he was doing his lily-gilding.

Andy jumped out to unfasten the staple and swing open the doors of the shed. And then, of a sudden, Pete Black turned his head, bulged out his eyes, went green and let in his clutch. A car was charging at him from the right. Pete kicked his old heap in the pants with his throttle foot to get into the shed.

But it was no use. The driver of the gaudy red coupé coming at them didn't know the difference between the cinders he was riding and the muddy grass just in front of the shed. When he stepped on his brakes, his job locked wheels and slid.

Pete Black couldn't save the doodle. The red coupé clipped it. In spite of the tow-bar the blue midget practically took off. It was flipped away from the sedan, hit, rolled over once and wound up on its side.

Pete drew shuddering breath as he leaped out. That finished the midget for Bradbury fair. The team of Searle and Black was washed-up. All Pete Black's pipe-dreams for his driver popped.

Pete ran toward the midget. He straight-armed the driver of the red coupé out of his way; he never even saw the guy. He was hoping hard against a certainty. But his first look told him that the job—and that went



Pete drew shuddering breath as he leaped out. That finished the midget. All Pete Black's pipe-dreams for his driver popped.

for the frame, too—was a mess. A lot of money, sweat and brains were down the river.

The coupé-driver, knocked onto his bottom by the heel of Pete's hand, scooped up a chunk of stone in a passion. The rock sailed past Pete's head as he hung over his crashed midget. Andy Searle, who moved as fast on his feet as behind a wheel, blocked him as he reached for another stone and grabbed his arm.

"Easy, Dorio!" Andy Searle said. "Pete, this heah's Tony Dorio, the diver!"

Pete Black, spinning away from the midget, laid hands as powerful as wrenches on Dorio. He was feeling like killing this guy a few times. But he remembered. He was no carefree mech now. He was a hot driver's manager.

"Diver!" Pete said hoarsely. "Right! Start divin' in your pants pocket for one hundred bucks, diver! That's what it'll cost to unscramble this job, not countin' all the prize-money we lose tonight."

Dorio laughed. It was like the crackling of high-tension sparks. He wrenched away and leaned dramatically against his coupé. His black eyes blazed venomously at them both.

Pete turned to Andy Searle. "Will you hunt a phone, Andy?" he said. His voice needed sanding. "Call up Red MacDonald, who has a shop over in town. Tell him we got a bent frame and we want to start on it right away. He'll ask about money; tell him it'll be in his hand before we take the car out of his place."

"Sho' will," Andy said. He climbed into the sedan and started.

Pete Black turned on Dorio. "Got insurance?" he asked.

Dorio laughed again. "Good-by, sucker," he said, and reached for the red coupé's door handle.

Pete Black grabbed Dorio by the neck and ran him into the shed. Andy's test would come later, on the track, Pete figured. Now he had to show his own stuff by getting Andy on that saucer.

"One hundred bucks," he said again. "Or do I call the cops?"

Dorio's eyes switched around like the tail of an angry cat.

"You were trying to grab off this shed that I'm storing my car in," he said. "An' you been so tough about a little skid into your kiddie-car that you don't get a dime out o' me."

"Russ Hensen took five bucks off me yesterday to use this place the three days we're riding," Pete Black said. He was trying to be reasonable. "You're payin' you!"

By that time Dorio had spotted the spoke of a cart-wheel. He edged a few inches toward it, trying to keep Pete's eyes on him by looking intent into them.



Pete was set; he caught Dorio squarely on the chin.

"I don't collect from Russ Hensen till after I dive at four o'clock," he said. "An' what I collect then, I'd burn before I'd pay you off!"

He jumped sideways, went for the spoke and got it. Pete Black came in under the swing of the spoke, and it bounced off his bent shoulders. Before Dorio could try again, he knocked the diver dizzy with a case-hardened fist. He was in no mood to play. But he was still trying to think. Promoting yourself from mech to manager is a strain on a man. He sat down on Dorio. The diver squirmed only half-heartedly, or maybe half-consciously.

PETE thought: "Here's a lug that don't look now like he'd be up to diving sixty feet inside an hour, not without he falls off his perch." And then he thought: "Hensen's in a jam for a crowd-catcher if Dorio don't come back. And I'm doing Dorio a favor, not calling in the cops."

He was remembering that Andy Searle had been a fire-diver and was homesick about it, at that. He thought of that high platform, and shuddered and closed his eyes. But he opened them up again. Apparently a dive was nothing to Andy Searle. And

his future as a midget champ hung on it. Andy would come through in the doodlebugs with a good car under him.

The thing was lining up in Pete's skull. Hensen, the tight carnival boss who'd squeezed him for a five-bill to park out in a leaky shed, was going to need a fire-diver worse than he needed air in his lungs if Dorio didn't show. And he, Pete Black, could supply Hensen with a fire-diver right in the nick of time for—say, one hundred bucks.

"It makes sense," Pete said to himself. "We could be set to roll by tomorrow night. Having a pilot like Andy racing would be money in Hensen's kick, too."

He looked down at Tony Dorio, who was beginning to unwind after the tap on the conk. "There's a guy I owe something to."

The first part of it was a dish of duck soup. There was a storeroom, or maybe it was a feed-bin, right there in the shed. And not five feet from Pete's hand was a piece of old line hanging on the same peg with a split horse-collar.

Pete Black got busy. He tied Dorio's hands behind his back and then lashed them to the horse-collar. He

doubled up Dorio's feet and tied them to the other end of the horse-collar. He gagged the guy with some friction tape. He made a job of it, and then he lugged Dorio, horse-collar and all, into the bin and dumped him. He closed the bin, shoved a stick through the staple, came out of the shed and almost ran into a tall, bony number just outside.

"Where's Dorio?" this goop asked. His nose was red, and his clothes were shiny.

Pete Black turned cold but he kept walking. "Dorio?" he said over his shoulder. "Aint seen him."

"That's funny," said the goop. "That's his car right there."

Pete Black stopped dead. That red coupé was broadcasting where Dorio was. He started thinking again fast.

"Sure it's his heap," he said. "I thought you were lookin' for Dorio? I got a little job to do on his car."

He turned his back on the guy, opened the shed door, climbed into the coupé and drove it in. Before he came out again, the goop had gone. Pete stapled the door. "Now Dorio's got me for assault, kidnaping and car-stealing," he muttered uneasily. "But he aint got Andy for nothing."

Pete wiped the sweat off his face, looked around to make sure nobody else had wandered this far away from the midway and exhibit buildings, and found himself facing Russ Hensen. The big carnival boss was on the prance. He waved his watch as if he was going to slug Pete with it.

"Where's Dorio?" he yelled. "That high-diving—" There was more.

"His car is in there," Pete said. He stared across the infield. The crowd was piling up thick in front of the diving platform, and the free acts were under way. But the build-up all through the spieling would be for Dorio, the death-daring, flame-defying so-and-so.

It was time now for Dorio's flop into the fiery pool. Russ Hensen was hot enough to sizzle your finger. Russ tried again.

"That—" It was certainly brisk.

Pete grabbed Hensen's arm as he started away.

"Maybe I don't know where Dorio is," he said, "but for one hundred fish I can get you a fire-diver that'll make Dorio look tame as dunking a doughnut in your coffee. This boy I got is no fire-diver; he's a hell-diver, that's what he is. He—"

But Russ Hensen was looking for Dorio too hard to be listening. Also, Pete figured sadly, a guy as tight as Russ Hensen was would automatically go deaf when somebody said one hundred in his ear. Hensen had to be still more desperate.

Anyhow, Hensen tore loose and went off toward the Wheel of Fortune. Pete Black didn't chase him.



He began looking around for Andy. "Hensen will listen when he sees Andy, sure. Prob'ly he knows Andy's work."

He couldn't find Andy anywhere. By now he was sweating down his back. This manager stuff had kinks in it that couldn't be unscrambled just with a wrench. He headed for the back of the grandstand, where there is usually a telephone. But Andy wasn't there. He line-bucked the crowds to other telephones, but Andy wasn't at any one of them. He called up Red MacDonald over in town.

"He's come and he's gone, and with no profit to me," Red said. "Ye want to send a better liar than that one before I'll be getting steamed up over straightening your frame for pay out of a purse ye haven't won yet."

"But Red, you'll have the money—"

"I will," said Red firmly, and hung up before Pete could say any more.

PETE'S feet were as hot as his head; as he hurried past a hamburger stand he remembered he had once been hungry. He kept going. He had to come through as Andy's manager. He had to. He'd been shooting his mouth off about what he was going to

"Dorio?" Pete said over his shoulder. "Aint seen him."

do for Andy. So far, all he'd done was work up Andy's appetite.

"I wish I was up against something reasonable, like a mill that won't perk," he mumbled.

The only thing that encouraged him was that the free acts were still going on, and the spieler was still promising 'em a fire-diver. He could feel the crowd was getting restless.

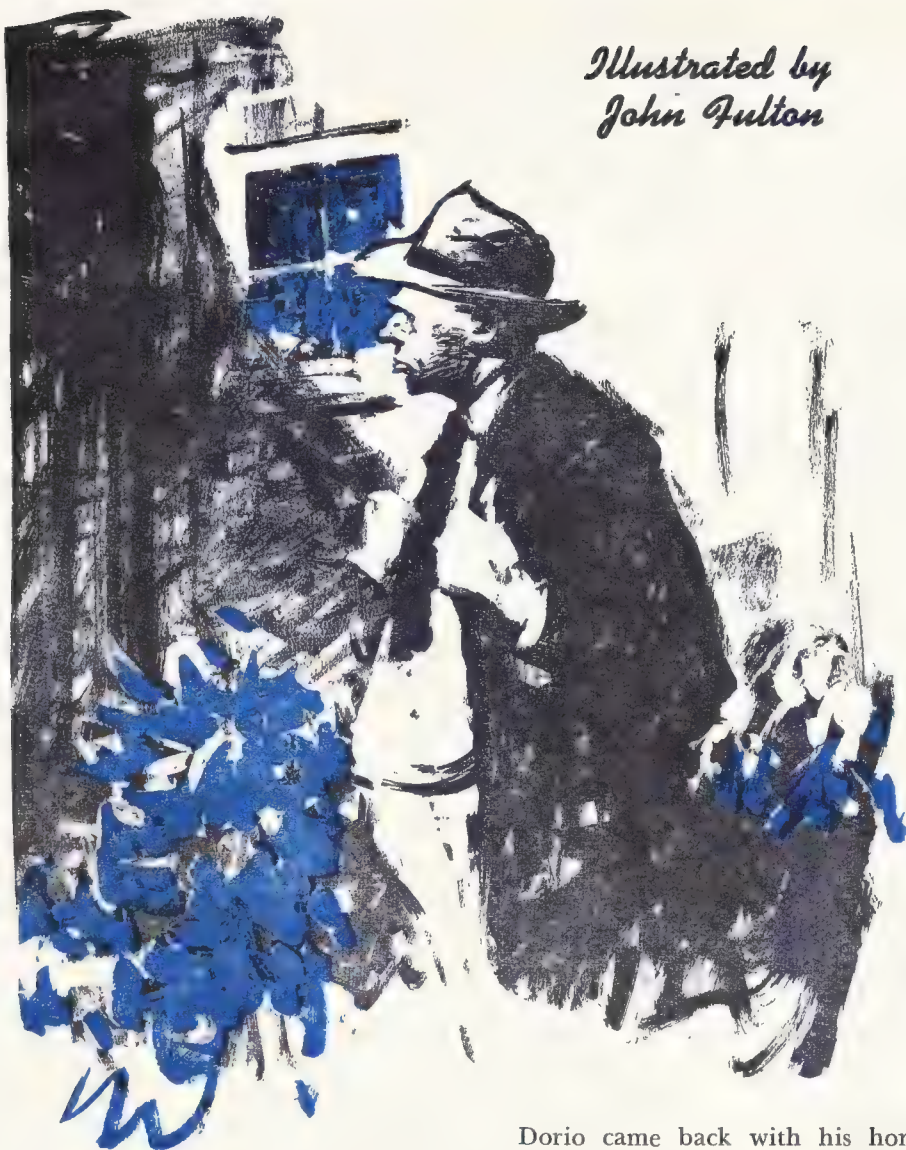
He took a turn around by the end of the midway and spotted his old sunburned sedan parked down by the shed where he had Dorio on ice. He couldn't see Andy himself, but he went for his heap like a hot doodle down the finish stretch.

Andy wasn't by the car or by the midget or outside the shed. Pete opened up and went in. The shed looked empty, and the stick was still in the staple of the grain-bin. Andy was just as much gone to Pete as Dorio was to Russ Hensen. Pete looked at the bin.

"Maybe by now Dorio will be feeling like doing business with me," Pete Black said to himself.

He pulled the stick out of the staple.

*Illustrated by
John Fulton*



Dorio bounced up at him like a jack-in-the-box. He clutched a horseshoe in his hand, and he cracked it against Pete's skull before Pete had time to do anything but start a dodge.

Pete clinched and fell backward. Dorio, writhing, landed hard on his chest, but Pete kept his grip on him as he scrambled up. They went dancing all around the floor. It was Pete's ringing head that was supplying the music.

If that shoe had been on the hind-leg of a mule, it couldn't have moved faster than Dorio had swung it. Still groggy, Pete hung his weight on Dorio to tire him out.

DORIO'S getting loose from that horse-collar was discouraging. The fire-diver must have been an escape artist one time. You couldn't trust these carnival guys not to pull miracles on you.

After a while Pete got a little sense back in his noisy head. Dorio was kicking the shins off him. He managed to get his knee up against Dorio's chest and shoved him clear.

Dorio came back with his horseshoe. Pete was set; he caught him squarely on the chin with a straight jab and shot him back against the bin. He closed, clamped his hands on Dorio's hips and heaved him in.

Pete slammed the door and shoved the stick through the staple. He leaned against the door and panted. Dorio started pounding on the other side with his horseshoe.

"I got to go on managing," Pete muttered. He straggled back toward the midway. Far off, he could see the big crowd was still bunched in front of the free acts. There were catcalls and whistles now.

Suddenly Pete stopped dead. "No!" he whispered. "No! I couldn't!"

An idea had come down on him like an icy avalanche. It turned him cold.

He'd sworn that as manager for Andy Searle he'd go to bat. He'd never find Andy in time. But he could go after that hundred himself! There was nothing to stop him.

Anybody could fall sixty feet. There was no trick to coming down, after you'd once stepped off the perch. That horseshoe was still ringing bells in his head, but he could think all right.

One hundred bucks would put Andy Searle on his way to the championship of the midgets. Midgets? A guy like that could cop the five-century grind on the bricks at Indianapolis.

He made out Russ Hensen boring savagely through the indignant mob around the free acts. He chased Russ. Dorio's horseshoe and maybe a scarcity of hamburgers had taken the strength out of him, but he caught up.

"Look, Hensen!" he said. "One hundred bucks, and I'll do the dive for you."

"Huh?" Russ Hensen's eyes narrowed like a cat's. "You?"

"In advance," said Pete.

"You ever dive?"

"Would I break my neck for a hundred bucks?" Pete asked.

Hensen grunted. His eyes switched to the crowd. A rough crowd, and getting rougher. "O.K.," he said. He grabbed Pete by the shoulder and shoved him toward a dressing-tent.

"Joe, lend this guy something to work the dive in," he said to an acrobat, and started toward the spieler.

"In advance!" Pete yelled after him. That horseshoe was still beating the gongs inside his skull.

Before Pete had climbed into somebody's tights, Hensen was back.

"Sign this release," he said.

Pete stuck out his palm. Hensen cursed and laid five twenties in the palm. Pete signed.

"Make it fast," said Hensen. "Watch him, Joel!"

He went away again. Pete scooped up a piece of paper, a fortune-teller's give-away. He borrowed a pencil, wrinkled his brain in a grim effort to concentrate, and began to scrawl with a loose-feeling hand:

"Frisk me for the money, Andy. It's pinned inside the tights. Get Red Mac to fix up the frame. Cop yourself first money. You can do it."

He paused; then added: "I'll be all right in a few days."

He licked his lips. "I hope," he mumbled and signed his name.

"They'll be taking them acts apart any second now," said Joe in a neutral voice.

"I'm set," Pete said. "Look, Joe, you give this to my partner, Andy Searle, will you? He's a little—"

"Andy?" said Joe. "Sure. I know him."

He took the note and pointed toward the execution block. No, that was wrong; the fire-diver's rig. That was where they were headed—toward the diver's rig, and that bell-ringing horseshoe inside Pete's skull drowned out the yammering of the crowd.

"All you got to do is fall off," Pete told his head.

The executioner—no, Russ Hensen—was waiting for him at the bottom of the ladders. The crowd had caught sight of him and was quieting down a



*"Look, Hensen!"
Pete said. "One
hundred bucks,
and I'll do the
dive for you."*

bit. Pete's fingers brushed against the wad of bills inside his waistband.

Russ Hensen, eyes pinpointed, uneasy, was watching him. "Who socked you?" Hensen demanded.

"It's nothing," Pete said. Was he supposed to make a speech? "I'm a good manager," he said to Hensen, and grabbed hold of the ladder with both hands. The horseshoe inside his head took a running start and bonged at the side of his skull. It wanted to get out, maybe. You couldn't blame it—not even a horseshoe would want to fall that far. He started up the ladder. Anybody could climb a ladder.

Anybody could, but this ladder was certainly waving around. It was trying to get into the rhythm of the whanging horseshoe. He looked down. So was the fair-ground—waving—like a flag!

Suddenly he knew that he had to hook his hands and legs into the rungs of that ladder and hold on tight for a minute. The ladder was waving too much. He hung on and closed his eyes, marshaling his strength to overcome the waving and the bonging.

He opened his eyes. The ladder was steadier. Something grabbed his foot. He looked down. Russ Hensen, purple-faced, was just below him. There was a great silence around them.

"Come down off that ladder, you yellow—"

"No!" said Pete. "I'm all right now. I just fall off."

He jerked his leg free of Hensen's grip, and then, as Hensen reached again, kicked violently.

It was as if he had kicked the inside of his own head. He grabbed at the ladder. He felt Hensen climbing up against him, and then he felt nothing.

WHEN he came to, he was back in the tent, with the acrobat Joe pouring water on his face. Joe stopped. He rubbed a handkerchief gently across Pete's forehead.

"Right in the beezer," Joe said with great content. "You kicked Hensen right in the beezer."

Derisive faces were peering in the opening of the tent. Then, abruptly, they looked away.

Pete scrambled to his knees. The horseshoe wasn't so noisy now. He

felt the waistband of the tights. The wad of money was gone.

"Hensen took it," Joe said. "I guess he had a right."

Stricken, Pete climbed into his own shirt and pants. He looked out toward the dive with a shudder. The spieler had stopped talking. Now there wasn't a sound from the crowd, either. The only noises came from different spots farther off, that didn't belong. They made the silence all the thicker around the free acts.

Everybody was looking up. Pete pried his sore head up high enough off his chest to glance at the high platform. Somebody was up there.

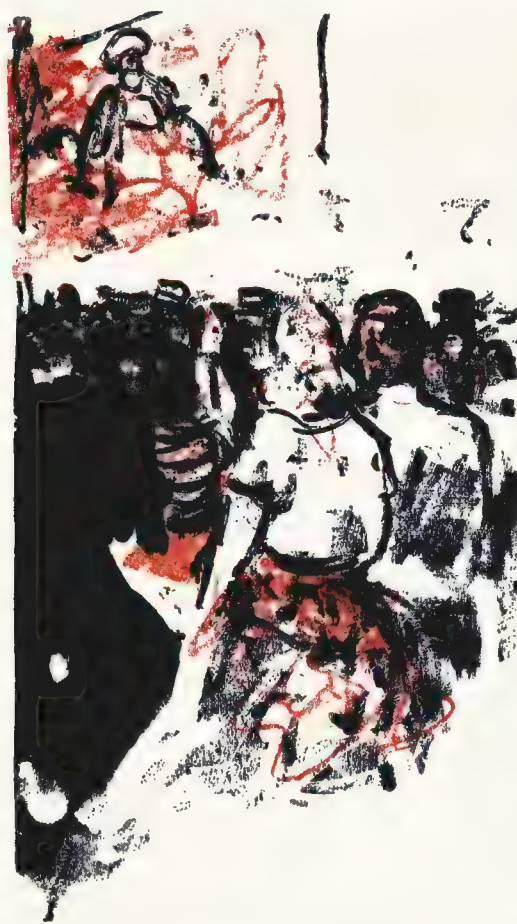
Pete's teeth whistled out between his teeth.

It was Andy up there on the platform, Andy in a pair of green swimming-trunks! Andy! And the crazy little guy had his back to the crowd, balancing on his toes, on the very edge of that lofty perch. *Andy!*

Pete swayed dizzily on his feet.

This was all wrong. A red-hot lead-foot like Andy Searle, a guy who could really wind 'em up, and he was ready to go over backward from up sixty feet in the air! It was a ghastly waste of talent: it cut the heart out of Pete Black.

"Andy!" he quavered. "*Andy!*" His shaky voice lifted high over the silent crowd. Andy turned abruptly, looked down without seeing Pete, and waved a hand.



Russ Hensen, beside the tank, turned a megaphone up to Andy.

"Are you ready?" he called.

"Sho' am," said Andy.

"Don't, Andy!" Pete cried.

Down below, somebody stuck a torch into the shallow pool, about the size of a bird's bathtub. The pool went plop! The whole works burst into fire. The flames leaped up high over the tank, writhing in the breeze. People shrank away.

Pete tried to yell again.

ANDY let himself overbalance. He arched back. Slowly he fell head down off the platform.

He dropped, turning over in the air. He kept on dropping. The flames leaped up to get at him. He fell toward them, his body still turning. Falling! Falling!

He dropped into the flames. Smack! He hit the fiery surface. The whole top of the pool leaped up in a high blazing column around the hole Andy made. For a minute it looked as if that hot, spurting geyser would set fire to everything in the fair. Down the burning stuff came. Splash! It went out as it hit.

Andy stuck his head out of the pool, grabbed the side and heaved himself up. The band hit a chord. The crowd cut loose. Andy lifted a hand to them.

"Look, you," said Joe in Pete's ear. "How about lettng go o' me?"

Hastily Pete released his clutch.

Somebody went burrowing through the mob, leaving a wake of angry yapping. With a jolt, Pete saw that it was Dorio.

"That guy couldn't be trusted locked in a submarine!" Pete said wildly. Dorio was battling straight toward Russ Hensen.

Pete started toward Andy, ignoring derisive yells and comments hurled at him by people all around him. Their eyes were contemptuous.

"Kid," Pete said, "you oke?"

"Sho' am," said Andy mildly. "It aint cold today. Not what you'd call right cold."

Pete sat down on a step. He pointed a shaky finger at Russ Hensen up on the stage, getting a molten earful from Dorio.

"Did you stick Hensen right, kid?" he asked hopefully. "Did you collect a hundred?"

Andy Searle squeezed the water out of his hair. "It's this way, Pete," he said slowly. "Dorio disappeared. Hensen was sho't a fish-diver. And the crowd was rufflin' up. I was ovah in a cook-tent, talking to some folks, when I heard he was in a jam—a real jam. He tol' me some substitute he got hadn't gone th'ough—"

"Yeah! But how much?"

"Of cou'se when Russ asked me to go ovah fo' him. I obliged."

"Obliged!" said Pete. He didn't like the word. "For how much?"

"Sho'," said Andy. He was embarrassed. "I couldn't ask fo' money. Russ was in a difficulty."

Pete closed his eyes.

"Uh-huh," he said at last, slowly. "He was in a difficulty. The penny-squeezing, shakedown— In a difficulty!"

He got up and sat down again. "Yeah," he said. "I see how it is. Well, that counts me out."

He ran his fingers over the lump on his head. He didn't say anything more for quite a while. Then, at last, he got something figured out.

"Andy," he said, "I guess I'm just a mech. I can hot up a midget, but at managin'—I'm not there. And I'm telling you, kid, you do need a manager."

Wearily he shoved a hand under his sagging jaw.

"What!" said Andy. His eyes widened. "Now I am su'prised. The way I figger it, you the best manager I evah saw."

Pete Black looked at him. What with this thing and that, Pete was now feeling lower than a mole's toenail. Sunk.

"You wouldn't kid a guy, would you, Andy?" he said piteously. "Not right now, you wouldn't?"

"I sho' would not," said Andy. "And I wouldn't want a better manager; I sho' would not."

Pete Black stood up. He looked around with a desperate glare and his fingers massaged his brain.

"Andy, it seems to me I heard somebody countin' over me," he said. "I heard 'Six! Seven! Eight! Nine!' But I aint heard 'Ten!' yet."

He shook his head. "Not yet! And as your manager, I might still have one more sock left in my mitt. Just one."

PETE started over to where Dorio had just finished uncorking to Russ Hensen. They both watched him come with plenty of sparks in their eyes. With all he had left, Pete bucked himself up. He managed to get a little swagger into his walk.

"Yeah," Pete said to the hostile pair. "I'm no diver myself, and Andy was mislaid. But you've got the idea."

He pointed to Dorio and spoke to Hensen.

"I put this no-good apple-bobber away for one performance to show you how a real hell-diver pulls the trick, Hensen. Now we come to the business angle. Andy Searle over-dives, and we undercut them all. All, I said!"

Russ Hensen straightened up. He pointed his ears at Pete.

"Undercut?" Hensen repeated.

"I'll have you pinched!" yelled Dorio at Pete.

Hensen was shocked at such a crack from a carnival man.

Pete Black didn't blink.

"You're it if somebody's pinched, Dorio," he said. "You tried to kill a competing diver, and me too, with your car. The dent's still in your fender, and the tire-marks are in the mud."

He tapped Russ Hensen on the chest. "How much does this dunker drag down? Whatever it is, it's too much. We may be out of doodlebugging, but at fire-diving we're a one-man aquacade."

Russ Hensen's eyes gleamed. He smacked his jaws.

"Now, look!" Tony Dorio pawed Pete's arm. "It's terrible how easy car accidents happen. But nobody can say I won't pay up when I crash a guy."

He pounded his chest. "Not me! Not Tony Dorio! An' I'd be the last one in the world to rob Hensen and the fair of a red-hot midget driver. A hundred, you said? Come with me, Mister—the jack is practically in your kick."

Dorio dragged at Pete Black. Pete stood there with his aching head on one side. Dorio couldn't budge him.

"Well, call it one and a half, since you can't roll tonight," Dorio said hastily. "Hey, you! What you waiting for?"

"Waiting for some guy to count 'Ten!' over me," said Pete dreamily. "And I don't hear it. I don't hear it!"

The Thunderbolt

IN June, a Congressional bill opened the immigration door to a quota of one hundred natives of India per year. Some of the English were clearing out of India about this time, too. It was in August that I was invalided home, and stepped into the result of these political doings when my ship tied up at Los Angeles harbor. The result was murder, devilry let loose; and I was in the middle of it.

For the first time in seven long years, I set foot again on American soil, with the war over and almost forgotten. Here I was a mere nobody—just another doctor, one white-collar man among thousands competing for work: Hugh Clements, M.D., looking for a job.

Back in India, this same Hugh Clements had been a person of importance, the master of a mission hospital, the petty lord of a district, hobnobbing with the great, clubbing with judges, rajahs, noblemen, soldiers. Here he was a man of thirty-two, unknown and obscure—or so I thought. Yet none of us can escape the backwash of the past. Here, far away from India, the relentless shadows of that bloodstained country were reaching out to cloud my path with mystery and appalling horror.

Even aboard ship the thing began. Just before we docked, I received a rather curt radiogram which astonished and delighted me:

Hugh Clements, M.D.
S.S. *Island Queen*.

Immediately you arrive telephone me Hotel Vista, Pasadena. Urgent and imperative. Best regards.

Trent.

Astonishing as were the brusque words, they were characteristic of the signer. Sir James Trent, the judicial light of my Indian district, was a typical British jurist; conservative and dignified, yet delightfully human. I had been much with the family.

Six months before I started home, Trent left India on sick leave, taking his daughter Virginia with him, and stopped in California under medical care. I had naturally written them of my coming arrival, but had received no response. Hence, the radiogram was heart-warming. So was the thought of seeing Virginia so soon.

Trent held me in a certain annoyed respect because of my propensity to



I found that the envelope contained ten crisp one-hundred-dollar bills.

cut red tape and get brisk results. Also, I knew India far better than he did, for my father had had an American hospital there in past years. I had pulled Trent's charming and lovely daughter through two bad fever attacks, and we were on a basis of firm friendship, at least. His "urgent and important" summons rather baffled me, but I had no premonitions, merely very pleasant anticipations. Murder was far from my thoughts.

So, upon disembarking, I sought out the "C" section of the Customs shed. No one was meeting me, I had no relatives to bother about and was pleasantly unhurried. The day was young, and I took an eager delight in the American scene. It was wonderful to be among my own people once more. I found my trunks, lighted a cigarette, stood waiting for an inspector to attend to me, and thought what a lucky devil Hugh Clements was to be out of India forever.

"I have a room for you at my hotel, the Armitage." Spoken in Hindustani, from close behind me! It was a man's voice, a peculiar voice, so powerful and richly vibrant as to set the spinal nerves tingling. And—in Hindustani! "We can get a doctor there. If necessary, I can telephone and get one now."

"I can wait, Your Highness," came a feeble, thin response. "But I know the feeling. An attack is coming on."

Partly from curiosity, partly from professional interest, I turned and looked at the speakers. They were quite close to me, beside two large trunks.

The one was an old man with waxen skin, quite bent and feeble, whom I had several times seen aboard ship, always alone, always occupying a deck-chair, obviously an invalid—and as obviously a white man. His name was Chaffee, and this was the only thing I knew about him.

But the other—the "Highness" who must have come to meet him here, the man of striking voice, was startlingly handsome. He had a faintly bronze skin, a thin black mustache, and wonderfully powerful, magnetic eyes; he was the sort of man who dominates whatever company he may be in—young and aggressive and vital. I took him to be a Hindu or perhaps a Rajput. His business suit was excellently tailored. In his necktie was an old-fashioned scarfpin, a most unusual jewel, an intensely black stone that held a glowing crimson flame.

"I beg your pardon." I spoke impulsively, also in Hindustani to explain my intrusion. "If you are in need of any help, I happen to be a doctor."

The younger man turned to me. His dark, luminous eyes suddenly flashed as though in recognition. Indeed, to my great astonishment, he greeted me by name.

"Is it possible? Why, you're Dr. Clements, from the Gyantse Memorial Hospital at Lacpore!"

I smiled. The name was lettered large upon my trunks, of course.

"Correct, though I don't think we've ever met."

This seemed to amuse him.

"Well, since you don't recognize me, naturally you don't know me," he said. "Thank you for the offer. If we have any need, we shall be glad to call you in, but at the moment there's no necessity. May I have your address?"

"I have a reservation at your own hotel, the Armitage," I said rather curtly. The way he spoke, his discourtesy in withholding his name, nettled me. At this instant an inspector arrived, and nothing more passed between us. The two men had finished and departed long before I had my luggage clear.

Yet the timbre of that unknown man's voice lingered with me, quickening my pulses like the echoes of a rich temple bell. It was vibrant with force of character—that singular quality few can explain, which makes many an

of Indra

Four prominent men were marked for murder. Here follows the fascinating story of the first strange case.

by GORDON KEYNE

actor great, and enables even untrained talent to capture a crowd. Chaffee, I rightly concluded, was old and failing and of small importance, but his companion might be someone in Hollywood's acting circle. Good God, to think what a sorry stab at the truth I made!

Upon getting to the hotel and reaching my room, I put in a call for the hotel in Pasadena, and not upon Trent's account either. Still, I had no claims upon his daughter, merely a hope. At length I heard the rasping English voice of Sir James. He greeted me with a hearty cordiality that was good to hear.

"Your radio message was a bit laconic," I observed. "Nothing wrong, I trust?"

"Nerves, my boy, merely nerves. I was devilish upset when I sent that message, but everything's right now. Virginia is looking forward to seeing you, no less than I am. Can you drop in on us for tea?"

"Whenever you say, of course."

"We're just leaving for a luncheon engagement. Suppose you come over about four, Clements, if you will."

"On the dot," I rejoined, and hung up.

Why had he previously been so upset—why was everything now all right? And why had not Virginia been the one to answer the phone, dammit? No use asking myself silly questions, though.

So I devoted myself to unpacking and getting settled, since I expected to be at the hotel for the next week or two. Twelve-thirty saw me in shape, and I was on the point of seeking luncheon when my telephone rang. Answering, I immediately recognized the vibrant tones of Chaffee's companion.

"Dr. Clements? I am taking advantage of your kind offer of help. Will you be good enough to come to Room Five-ten? It is urgent."

"I'll be right along," was my reply. I paused, however, to phone the desk and inquire who had Room 510. A

Mr. Chaffee, was the reply—Howard Chaffee.

I was curious, of course. Unknown as he was to me, that younger man exerted a singular fascination. A Hindu? Impossible to say. His English had an Oxford intonation. So I hurried; when I knocked at the door in question, the man himself opened to me. I perceived that this was not a single room but an entire suite.

"I'm thankful you're here; it's my elderly friend Chaffee," he said rap-

There was nothing to indicate who had caused it or what had happened. But Sir James Trent was dead.



*Illustrated by
James A. Ernst*



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"I have a room for you at my hotel." It was a man's voice—in Hindustani. "We can get a doctor there."

"My hospital was at Tibet's back door," I said. "Where is he?"

Chaffee was in the bedroom, unconscious and breathing stertorously. I made a swift examination. Something to my surprise, his body told me that he was not nearly so old as he had appeared. But the scars—the scars! They horrified me with their evidence of repeated tortures; and at the same time, they informed me of everything. During the long war years I had seen such scars more than once. Northern India had been raged by spies and secret agents of a dozen nations in those days; cruelty had run rampant.

I looked up, to find the younger man watching me with anxious attention.

no cure, I'm afraid. The trouble is progressive."

"So he has informed me." My host regarded me calmly—it was the calm, not of unconcern, but of complete concentration upon me. "Can you give him any relief?"

“Temporary relief, yes, but the attacks will recur. If you’ll watch, I’ll show you what to do in future crises of this kind.”

I took off my coat and turned the unconscious, stiffened figure of Chaffee on its face. Then, during a good twenty minutes, I kneaded the nerve ganglia along the spine and at the base of the skull, to restore the lost circulation and stimulate the atrophied or dying nerves. I explained the process as I continued it.

At length the old chap uttered a gasp, and made a slight movement. I turned him over again. He was conscious now; he smiled up at us—a feeble, kindly smile—and then closed his eyes and was asleep on the spot.

Donning my coat, I followed the younger man into the outer room; there he turned and regarded me

"Forgive me for not mentioning my name; it is of no consequence," he said. "I must remind you of something far more important, something that happened three years ago. You were walking along a street in Lacpore and encountered a poor devil, out of his head, at the very point of death. Nobody cared; but you did. You took him into your hospital and restored him to life."

His knowledge startled me; he was calm, inscrutable, impervious. I lit a cigarette and nodded at him, wondering how he could have heard of the incident.

"Yes, I recall the case. A poor chap—a young fellow, too—badly injured in some native feud; shot up, wasn't he? Wounds festering, body emaciated, brain in delirium. I remember that one night, later, he completely vanished. I never learned who he was or what became of him. Odd that you should have heard of the mystery."

"Odd? No. He was a friend of mine. And now that man is dead," he replied. A sudden flash of terrific inward radiance leaped into his eyes and then was gone again—as though a furnace door had opened and closed. He extended an envelope to me.

"The kindness you did him, Dr. Clements, is not forgotten; take this, with my earnest thanks. I am one of those unfortunate people who never forgive an injury and who never forget a kindness. Good-by. It was kind of you to give your help with poor Chaffee."

He almost pushed me out of the suite, clearly desiring no further discussion of that happening in Lacpore.

When I reached my own room and opened the envelope, I found that

it contained ten crisp one-hundred-dollar bills.

Those eyes of his haunted me. Despite his words, I was tempted to think that this handsome, wealthy man might be the poor devil of a native I had picked up in the street. The notion was impossible and fantastic, and I dismissed it. And who was this white man from Tibet, this Howard Chaffee, so scarred and doomed by old tortures?

Behind those two men in Room 510 I sensed some titanic story, and my intuition was more frightfully correct than I dreamed. However, at the moment I chucked up the whole affair as one of those singular incidents cropping up in every physician's life. The war years, particularly in Asia, gave birth to many queer happenings.

So the matter was closed, I reckoned, and gratifyingly so; that thousand-dollar fee was badly needed. When I went downtown after lunch, I turned the money in with my other funds at the bank, and accounted myself lucky. Seldom do such sums bob up from the forgotten past!

Slightly before four o'clock a taxicab took me across the famed old Pasadena "suicide bridge," as the newspapers call that lofty structure from which so many unhappy souls have dropped to oblivion. Perhaps it was an ominous and sinister omen, but I quite forgot it in my anticipation of seeing Virginia Trent again.

I left the cab in the flowering grounds of the hotel, dotted by guest cottages in every direction. I went straight to the main building, and as I entered, came face to face with Virginia herself, to our mutual surprise.

What a lovely girl she was! Delicately slim and slender, so poised, so cool and sensible; violet eyes, bronze masses of hair, a skin like rosy gold. The sincere delight in her greeting flung me off balance and set my pulses hammering. We stood talking eagerly—would we had not! A moment or two might have made such a difference!

At length I asked after her father, and she broke into a laugh.

"Oh, I forgot that you really came to see him, Hugh! He's as well as can be expected; he banished me from the cottage half an hour ago. He's writing his memoirs, you see—'Bygone Days in the Punjab' or some such poisonous title. Who cares about bygone times these days? The atomic age has put the past out of mind. But he's enjoying it all, whether anyone else does or not."

She sobered, as I made some light comment, and looked me in the eyes.

"I must warn you, Hugh: he'll not be with us long. A few months at most, I'm afraid. But come along and see him for yourself. You might take a hand in his treatment; I've more faith in you than in any other doctor I know."

"He said over the phone he'd been upset," I mentioned. We had turned out of the main building and were strolling through the grounds toward the cottage occupied by the Trents.

She nodded.

"Yes, a bad thing happened yesterday. He got a letter, but burned it at once and refused to discuss it. His nerves have been ragged ever since."

A MOMENT later we walked into the cottage, Virginia giving her father a cheery hail. But there was no answer. We found him fallen forward across his writing-table, found him suddenly and horribly murdered, and within a matter of minutes.

Some unknown, pointed weapon had struck him over the temple, making one deadly wound and four slight ones surrounding it. There was absolutely nothing in sight to explain

the hurt; there was nothing to indicate who had caused it or what had happened. But Sir James Trent was dead.

Within five minutes the phone brought two radio cars. Commotion was held down to a minimum, but within the cottage was a furious rush of details, interviews, and police investigation. Virginia went to pieces. It was lucky that I had arrived in time to help her in these matters and to shield her from impertinent curiosity.

The hotel management came forward handsomely, assigning Virginia another cottage and against her protest providing a nurse to accompany her to it. When the ordeal of questioning was over, I helped pack up her things for the move, and saw her to her new quarters with the nurse, a woman almost as young as herself.

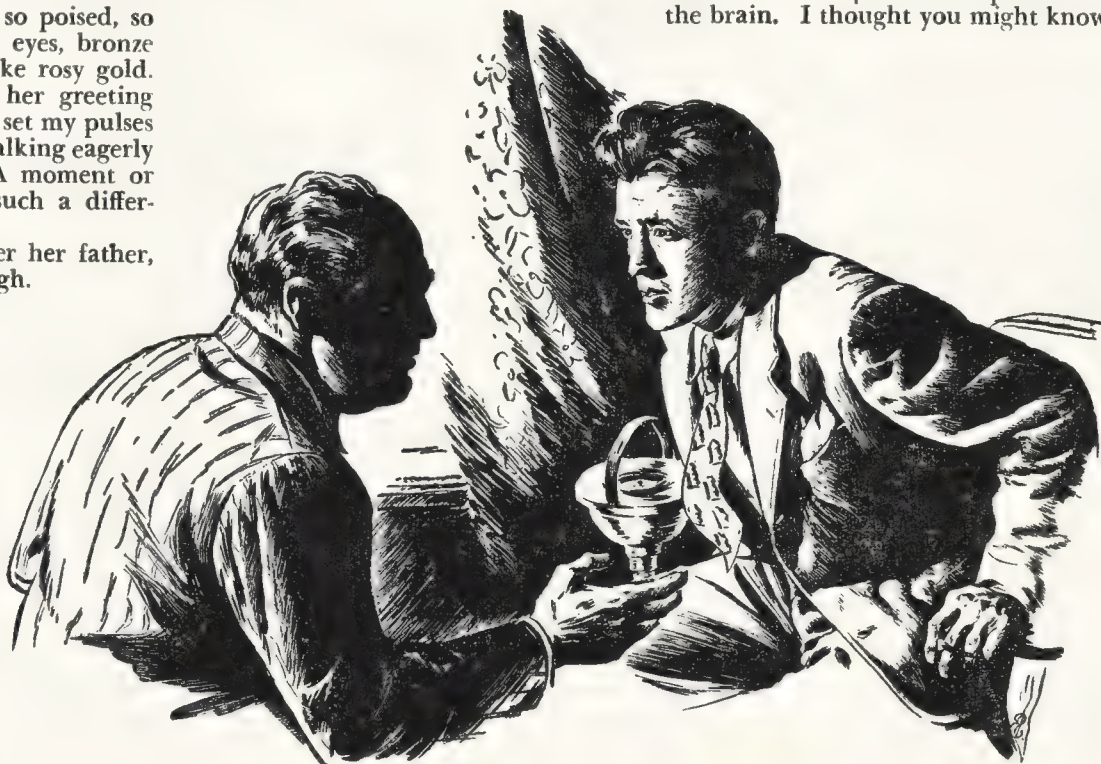
I had another go at the police. They gave me no information—could not, in fact, as they had none themselves and were obviously mystified. The only person who displayed any gumption was the hotel physician. He beckoned me aside and took me to his own office. He had heard a bit about me from Sir James, he said, and provided a drink. Then he regarded me with curious interest.

"Did you examine that wound, Clements?"

I nodded. "Yes. I don't savvy it at all. An inch deep and round, as though made by the end of a poker; but there's no poker about the cottage. And those four marks around the wound, too!"

"Right," he assented gravely. "Barely breaking the skin. As though there were four blunt pokers around the central sharp one that pierced to the brain. I thought you might know

"Listen, old man, you mustn't take this letter seriously," I said. Magruder gave me a hard look. "Trent's dead, isn't he?"





Seeing escape to be impossible, the killer whirled, struck at me. I went slap into him.

of some Indian weapon which could produce such a wound."

"Absolutely none," I replied, "and there's nothing on the place to have caused it. The police are stumped. So am I. No robbery, nothing taken, either. Why the murder? No cause. Have you any East Indians on the premises?"

"Nary a one. No Hindus around here, except the Hollywood fortune-tellers, and they are probably fakes. The check-up shows that Sir James had no visitors this afternoon. His daughter knows of no enemy."

"Yet somebody slipped in and killed him," I said.

He assented. "Yes. But the weapon—what could it have been? If we knew, it might give us a direct lead, might tell us everything. The police are confused; they'll get nowhere."

The hotel manager interrupted us, seeking me. A gentleman was in the lobby, a friend of Sir James—would I see him? A Colonel Magruder. At the name, I came out of my chair like a shot. Magruder! Why, he had retired, had left India a year ago to go home to Scotland. What was he doing here, if this was the same man?

It was Colonel Angus Magruder and no other. Trim, precise, lantern-

jawed, a pure martinet, and even in his civvies an obvious soldier. He wrung my hand hard, and we retired to the easy chairs in one corner of the lobby. He had of course heard what had happened, and the news had put him into deep agitation.

"A frightful affair, Clements!" he exclaimed. "Trent asked me over for tea to see you again. I'm living in Hollywood, you know. My niece is an actress in the cinemas there."

"All news to me," I said. "I supposed you were in Scotland."

"I was, for a bit, then came over here to be with my niece—but I say, Clements! When I first got here I heard about this affair, but don't half recall what they told me—it gave me a terrible turn. Have they found the chap Ram Lal? Trent had a chit from him yesterday, threatening us both—"

I leaped out of my chair. "Good Lord—that letter! Then you know who killed Trent?"

"No, no—that is to say, I thought you were aware of it. He intended to talk it over with you," said Magruder, mopping his forehead. Luckily, we were quite alone and no one witnessed my excited conduct. The newspaper men had all departed. "He

phoned me, telling about the letter. It would be no proof as to the murderer, I imagine—but confound it all—"

I cut in upon his incoherence.

"Magruder, if you know anything definite, let's have it. Trent was found dead and not a soul knows anything about it. Virginia said he had received a letter but burned it and refused to discuss the matter."

"Burned it? Then, dash it all, the evidence is gone!" Magruder stared at me. "Here, sit down; you make me devilish nervous. I'll tell you what it's all about."

To him, the shock had been terrific. He produced a cheroot and bit at it; his firm hand was unsteady. When he spoke, he picked his words with care.

"Some years ago we sent a dacoit—a hill bandit—to prison for life. Ram Lal was the name—ordinary name, ordinary banditry. Yet the case made quite a stir. You may remember it."

I shook my head impatiently, wondering what he was driving at.

"I brought the beggar in, by a bit of luck," he resumed. "Trent sentenced him. Balfour—he has retired since that time—prosecuted the chap; rather brilliantly done, too, since the evidence was not at all conclusive. I

should mention that I was enabled to catch the fellow through information given us by an American teak-buyer whom this same Ram Lal had held for ransom. That made four of us, counting the American, you see; four of us vitally concerned in the matter. Four of us did it."

HIS manner startled me profoundly. He was badly frightened. In such a man as Magruder, to whom fear seemed an utter stranger, this was a singular thing.

"Well, he made the usual threats; bitter ones, too," Magruder went on uneasily. "The war came along. He escaped, and turned up in Moscow. He came back to India at the time of the food riots, was in the Bengal affair, and the police finished him. Put half a dozen bullets in him, I heard. His Communist friends got him away but he died in the jungle somewhere—or so it was said. That's one angle of the business."

He paused to eye his cigar thoughtfully, then shot me a sudden, almost furtive glance; perhaps he was not too proud of the story he was telling.

"Later it came out that this chap was no ordinary native. He was the nephew of the Rajah of Sirvath; and today he'd be on the throne. Death has removed those in between. Do you get the picture, Clements?"

I whistled softly, and nodded. "Another Mr. A, no doubt."

Magruder winced slightly. All the world knew the scandalous tale of the notorious "Mr. A," which only a few years before the war shook both India and England; yet the central figure of that scandal came to the throne of a proud native state, to receive salutes from many a proud Briton.

"Never mind about that," snapped Magruder. "Ram Lal is dead, or so supposed. Well, Trent's letter of yesterday purported to be from him."

"A letter—from India?" I exclaimed.

"No, no; from here. A letter posted in Los Angeles. A letter saying he was on our trail and that we are destined to perish by the thunderbolts of Indra, whatever that may mean. I fancy it shook Trent up quite a bit, since it threatened his daughter as well. What's more, it mentioned the rest of us."

"Meaning just what?" I demanded. "Oh, the others concerned in the Ram Lal affair?"

"Precisely. As it happens, old Balfour, the prosecutor of Ram Lal, is up at Santa Barbara this very moment; spends his winters there and his summers in England, like many a retired pukka sahib. That's three of us in one locality. About the fourth, the American teak-buyer whose information led to Ram Lal's capture, I know nothing at all. The chap was called Chaffee or some such name."

It hit me like a blow. Chaffee! "Are you certain of that name?" I asked unsteadily.

"No, I'm not," rejoined Magruder, pulling at his cigar. "Merely my recollection of it."

Chaffee! Could there be some connection with that poor scarred devil at the Armitage, who had been so long in Tibet? A possibility; yet it seemed far-fetched nonsense. A thousand confused possibilities went dancing through my head. Chaffee's friend—well, he could hardly be Ram Lal, who was Chaffee's enemy. Magruder's story was clearcut and precise; everything else was contradictory and vague.

"Listen, old man, you mustn't take this threatening letter seriously." I turned earnestly to Magruder. "Might have been some sort of joke—"

"Yes?" Magruder gave me a hard, direct look. "Trent's dead, isn't he?"

"Might have been accident. Not even the police are sure about murder." I went on to describe the wound of Sir James, asking if he had any idea of what weapon could have produced it. He shook his head gloomily.

"No. The letter said thunderbolts—the thunderbolts of Indra. He was the Jove or king of the Hindu pantheon, you know; that's all I can say about it. Upon my word, it's all a bit thick! I'm off for home. Here's my card with the address. Have me informed of the funeral arrangements, will you? Count on me for anything needed, of course."

"If you know where to reach Balfour, you might wire him about the funeral."

"Right, when you let me know." Magruder rose. "And do run in on us before long. I'd take you home with me now, but at the moment—well, confound it, I'm upset!"

He was, and no mistake. I gave him my Armitage address and saw him off.

And now—what? Go to the police with this information? Such a course seemed mere folly; the police would laugh at me, for the simple reason that I had nothing definite to offer. That letter had been destroyed, and everything else was hearsay evidence.

Magruder, poor shaken old soul, was a weak reed upon which to lean. And to be honest, I took very little stock in the story he had told me. It was too fantastic, too unreal, to be a logical explanation of Trent's murder—for I felt it to be murder. That thunderbolt business washed it all up for me. Something far more solid and mundane than any thunderbolt had killed Sir James Trent.

Suddenly I recollected Magruder's saying Virginia had also been threatened in the letter. This brought me to life with a startled jolt.

Evidence or not, I had better talk with her about that letter; a warning

could do no harm. And for her own sake the police must be informed; she must have some protection until an investigation could be made. Perhaps Trent, too, had dropped some remark which would back up Magruder's story.

All in all, I must see her at once. I rose and went to the desk, thinking to phone her, but the clerk said there was no phone in her cottage. He called a bellman.

"Take Dr. Clements to D-4," he said. I protested there was no need, that I knew where her cottage was, but the bellman was already on his way, so I followed.

The grounds of the hotel, as I have intimated, were thickly grown with flowers and brush of every description. It was evident that anyone might easily have penetrated the surrounding hedge from the street. If this story about Ram Lal had any truth in it we were dealing with a person prepared to overcome the usual hotel protective measures. All the more reason, I thought, to make sure that Virginia was not molested.

We crossed the grounds and the bellman pointed to a small cottage almost concealed by enormous clumps of hydrangea bushes on either side its entrance.

"That's the one, sir," he said. "Until last week it was occupied by General—"

I never learned the officer's name. It was cut off by a woman's gasping, incoherent cry—a scream, suddenly and abruptly ended, from the cottage ahead.

Breaking into a run, I came abruptly into full view of the entrance. I had one glimpse of a figure lying on the steps—good God! My warning was too late! In the same eyeflash my gaze went from the woman's figure to that of a man slipping off among the bushes—just a scant glimpse of him, then he was gone.

UPON the spot, I turned and lunged after him, knowing that the bellman would see to Virginia Trent. The murderer of Sir James had returned to complete his job—and, by the Lord, I had him!

I was into the hydrangeas headlong and through them. He was well ahead of me, running frantically. I saw him to be a slim, dark man, a stranger, who glanced back at me and then legged it the harder. Fear drove him, but a wilder fury impelled me, and I gained rapidly upon him. He ducked in among more bushes, was lost to sight, then I picked him up again as I crashed through. Closer, now—not a dozen feet behind him!

Abruptly he lifted a thin, panting voice, screaming in Hindustani.

"Help me, help me!" It was a desperate cry. "*Jaldi jao*—quickly!"

I literally hurled myself at him; he evaded. Ahead of us rose a thick, high hedge which enclosed the hotel grounds; the street was outside. The killer tried to break through it, but I was too close upon him. Seeing escape to be impossible, he whirled and wildly struck out at me with something in his hand. Dodging the blow, I went slap into him headfirst.

The impact was terrific, sending us both to the ground and fetching a gasping squeal from him; he was underneath, and I got him by the throat with both hands. In a frenzy of fury, I banged his head against the ground—I could think of nothing except the figure of Virginia sprawled on those cottage steps.

Suddenly the hedge high above us burst asunder. I looked up, had a fleeting glimpse of two men flinging themselves upon me. This devil had called to them, of course; I was fighting for my life upon the thought, vainly trying to reach my feet.

They had me down—dark men like the first, Hindus. One of them was on top of me. I twisted, got his head pinned inside my left arm, and pumped my right into his kidneys. He screamed frightfully.

"Vajra!" came his voice. "Vajra! Use the thunderbolt!"

That one word flashed everything into my brain. I knew now what had killed Trent, what menaced me.

"Murderers!" I cried, also in Hindustani. "You'll see prison for this!"

In the afternoon sunlight, I caught a glitter above me, a golden glitter—then came a blinding smash, and blackness. Everything was ended.

AMID blackness, too, I wakened. Painfully, an insistent throbbing in my head. A strange silence filled the blackness.

Gradually proceeding from stuffy chaos to a piqued curiosity, I tried to lift a hand to my head, but had to lift both hands. The wrists were firmly bound together. By the time I was able to finger my scalp, I was coming around very nicely. There was a bump over my ear, nothing worse. No blood at all. I tried to speak, and managed only a hoarse croak. There was a click, and electric lights went on—a perfect blaze, it seemed to my dazed senses.

A face appeared, a figure grew upon me, that of an old Hindu, white-bearded, who stood gazing down at me. An old, calm, kindly face. I might have taken him for a Pathan except for the caste-mark on his forehead—the three tiny horizontal lines denoting a worshiper of Siva, a worship which may involve either flowers or blood.

"So you are awake, Clements sahib!" he said. I blinked amazedly at him and croaked a question.

"You know me? Where am I?"

"In the master's house, sahib. It is lucky that the blow was a glancing one and did not break the skin. I will summon the master."

He was gone before I could summon up any reply in my astonishment. The master? Who the devil was that? And why were my wrists bound with a tight cord? As my eyes became accustomed to the light, I gazed around.

The room was small, but incredibly rich. I lay stretched on a divan close to a flat-topped desk and chair. The walls were entirely hidden by fabulous old Mogul embroideries, each one worth a small fortune. Facing me, against this background, hung a fragment of woven silk in a frame of chased gold studded with precious stones. Why a bit of silk should be thus richly framed, I knew not.

About the walls hung jeweled weapons, all of Indian origin. Upon the desk stood an ancient golden image of Siva, ablaze with diamonds of the antique table cut. Then something else on the desk, beside this image, caught my gaze and gave me a start. Here was the thing that had killed Sir James Trent—this or a similar object! Here was the "thunderbolt" that had stricken me; how simple the explanation!

It was a vajra, one of the cult ritual implements of Hindu worship, representing the thunderbolt. This was probably made of polished bronze; it glittered like gold. Five darts were shown, bound together. That in the center projected beyond the others, which curved in around it. That central point had killed Trent, while the other points merely broke his skin. A thunderbolt indeed, and a deadly one!

Something else appeared closer to me, not six inches from my eyes; loosely hung on a hook protruding from the embroideries, was a Maratha dagger. It had a shagreen or sharkskin sheath glittering with several enormous emeralds—a glorious thing.

Thus, as I looked around, the impression rushed upon me of vast riches, of menace, of peril—and there was the Maratha knife, almost within reach!

My brain was fully awake now. I twisted myself sideways, toward the wall, and my fingers could almost touch the dagger. Another straining effort and they touched it, got it by the handle, grasped it. I let myself relax. The hook pulled out of the wall. The heavy, emerald-studded sheath fell to the floor behind my couch.

The knife itself remained in my hand!

Where I was, the confusion of recent happenings—all this mattered little; escape was the thing! Desperately, I made shift to move the knife and turn it so that it would bear upon

the cords binding my wrists. I was clumsy about it. The razor edge of that broad, flat blade touched my arm and parted my skin—then it reached the cords.

Indeed, I felt them give, and give again as a strand parted. Abruptly, to my despair, the knife slipped from my almost useless fingers. It fell between my thigh and the wall behind the couch. It was gone. I could not reach it at all.

IN vain I strained. Then, panting and exhausted, I relaxed to wait for new strength. The tingling in my fingers told me the cords were loosened; I could see them partly cut through. Blood from my slit skin welled over one wrist; I inched my sleeve over it.

At this moment the room door, facing me, swung open.

I stepped the dark, handsome man I had seen at the pier and again at the hotel—the man who knew me! I stared at him in stupefied recognition. A glimmer of the incredible truth broke across my brain. He must be the same man whose life I had saved at the Lacpore hospital. Three years ago—just about when Ram Lal had been shot to death. Then this man must be Ram Lal—or was I crazy?

"Well, Clements, I'm glad you're awake," he said. Seating himself in the desk chair, he swung around facing me. "I've kept you tied up, merely as a precaution—hello!" He leaned forward then, looking into my eyes. "What's this? You know me?"

Did he read it in my look—was he a mind-reader? He laughed, leaned back in the chair, amused. I lay transfixed, staring, horrified, and afraid.

"Oh, I see! Colonel Magruder came to the Hotel Vista, you had a talk with him—and he told you enough to clear things up, eh? And now you've realized the truth of the situation. I didn't know you were a friend of the Trents. We all make mistakes, don't we?"

He reached out to the desk, took up a cigarette, lighted it.

He was entirely calm, with that curious air of being impervious to emotion. His tone was casual, as though he were discussing the weather. I tried to speak, tried to make some reply, but the words choked in me.

"So you know the truth, or rather, you think you know it," he resumed. "You think I am that dacoit, Ram Lal, of whom Magruder probably talked. But in fact I am the Rajah of Sirvath—at least by right of birth."

"They're the same," I blurted. He gave me a slow, curious look and a shake of the head.

"Not at all, my dear Clements; but the English think they're the same. Ram Lal was just a dacoit who died in the jungle. As it happens, since



I thought of Virginia, a crumpled little heap of garments—and then I had him.

leaving India I have become a very rich man. Therefore I have power, and the ability to surround myself with things of art and value. You observe this fragment of silk in the golden frame? A Sassanid doublet. Silk woven under the Sassanid dynasty of Persia fifteen hundred years ago; there are not six such pieces in existence. This one cost me a quarter of a million, and is worth it."

With an effort, I broke the chains of his hypnotic manner.

"Are you—did you murder Sir James Trent?" I demanded.

"No, I did not," he said coolly. "Clements, you have guessed the truth. I was your Lacpore patient. When you found me dying in the streets like a dog, you brought me back to life. That action was destined to reach far into the future—into what is now the present."

He had not killed Trent? He was not Ram Lal? His denials bewildered me, confused me. I did not know what to think, what to believe.

"Then how did I get here—why am I here?" I demanded.

He pressed out his cigarette and turned to me, intently.

"Earlier today I told you that I never forget an injury or a kindness. You saved my life, brought me out of

hell, gave me a chance to escape. We belong to different races, but we're both men, and certain things are alike the world over—impulses, reactions, and emotions. Let me tell you the truth. Years ago, when evading the law, I joined the party of dacoits led by this Ram Lal. I was no thief, no murderer, no dacoit. I want you to believe this, Clements. I hold you in respect and liking and gratitude. I belonged to that band, but I was no participant in their crimes."

I almost believed him. His vibrant tones thrilled me with their magic. His steady, luminous eyes fascinated me. I lay staring at him, aware that I was at last hearing the background of this whole affair. The door was opening.

"A rascally teak-buyer, captured and ransomed by Ram Lal, wanted publicity and rewards," he went on. "When that man was a prisoner of the gang, I saved his life. I saw to it that he was ransomed and rescued. Like yourself, he was an American. His name was Chaffee—not Howard, the man you helped, but a brother, Gerard Chaffee."

He smiled at my fresh bewilderment.

"This Chaffee later caused my capture. Ram Lal was dead, but he identified me as Ram Lal, after Colonel

Magruder captured me. The British thought me a Moscow agent and were frantic to be rid of me. I did not resist arrest, for I did not realize what depths of treachery awaited me. Others were bribed to sustain Chaffee's identification of me. It was a great thing for the government to have captured Ram Lal, you see."

"That sort of thing can't be done," I said. "You had a name. You could prove your identity."

His brows lifted. "The nephew of a rajah? No! I dared not proclaim the fact. My silence was desired; the family bought it with promises of future freedom and wealth. I did impart my real name to the judge who tried me, to Sir James Trent. He called me a liar. The British still ruled India and wanted me to be the notorious dacoit, Ram Lal."

His face darkened. For an instant he was silent. I no longer disbelieved his story; I knew he was telling the exact truth. Everything was coming straight at last.

"I was tried and sent to prison for life—I, under the name of Ram Lal. I, who had committed no crime, was doomed, cut off from the world for life. Four men accomplished this thing, Clements. Do you wonder that I came to hate them with all my heart?

I had no hope, except in escape. Well, the Japs invaded Bengal and in the tumult of war, I escaped, was badly shot and nearly died—but I am alive, thanks to you."

So it was an escaped criminal whom I had saved in Lacpore.

IT is impossible to describe the intensity of the man. He remained perfectly cold and calm; but like that black gem in his cravat, he was inwardly alight with crimson fire. This man of stone actually held me spell-bound with his blazing force of character. And seeing what was coming, I shrank from the revelation.

"Four men! Chaffee, Gerard Chaffee, went his way, got the rewards offered for Ram Lal, and is today a rich man. Sir James Trent, who refused my plea for justice, went his way. Magruder got a decoration and went his way. Balfour—ah, that pig of a Balfour!" The intonation of his voice deepened. "He, the prosecutor, got money out of it too, and went his way. And now?"

The long, slim fingers of his hand moved spasmodically.

"I am here, I, the Rajah of Sirvath! Those four men are—or were—all in this country. Do you understand? One of them has paid in full. Now I am free, powerful, not striking with unseen hand but giving them full warning. Death is no great punishment, but to them it seems terrible. Trent was the first—"

"And his daughter," I cut in. "You killed her, too. You lied to me."

His head jerked up with a strange dignity.

"No lies. I am sorry she was killed," he said quietly. "And I did not do it."

"You caused it," I snapped at him. "Your revenge may have been justified; I don't know. But when you killed an innocent, lovely girl, you stepped over the mark."

He leaned forward again, as though startled. "So! So that was it! I see why you came straight to them on landing. Clements, look at me, believe me! I swear to you that I meant her no harm. I threatened her in the letter, yes, merely in order to stab Trent more deeply. It was that fool Chandra who got his orders mixed. He killed the one, then went back to kill her. Well, he paid for his mistakes."

Again I found myself believing him, and struggled against it. Agitation had come into his features; then he banished the emotion and became again impassive, cold.

"Those four men who wrecked my life shall die. Human life—bah! You know how little it means in the scheme of things. And you're in no danger from me, I assure you; I owe you a great debt. You can't hurt me. And I want you to know the truth about

me, the reasons for my acts. About that girl—I am sorry, really sorry, Clements. If only she had not been harmed! Now you have become my enemy, and I regret it."

I did not want to think about Virginia. My incredulous horror had quieted. I spoke at him almost calmly, for now I was facing reality.

"You imagine that these four men deliberately wronged you. They did not. Perhaps Chaffee did, but not the others. They may have been guilty of mistakes—and you seize on that pretext to go into an orgy of murder and whine about your wrecked life!"

"How singular that you, who saved my life, should know any of those four men!" he said almost musingly. "I did not suspect it. My agents failed me there. But you're in no danger; I owe you my life. Luckily those men of mine, hearing you speak Hindustani, fetched you away with them. I shall set you free."

"You'd better not," I said. Thought of Virginia lying dead on those cot-tage steps maddened me. "I'll see you hanged for those murders if it's the last thing I ever do!"

He smiled slightly. "Keep your poise, Clements. You'll do no such thing; I'm far beyond your reach. Besides, the police would laugh at your story; they already have the killer of Trent and his daughter."

"What?" I exclaimed, startled.

"Certainly—the man whom you pursued and caught, Chandra. You fractured his skull. My other men left him there. Lying beside him was the bronze vajra that killed Trent and the young woman; thus, the evidence is complete. Further, Chandra is already wanted for a murder near Fresno. I pick my agents with care, you see."

He had me blocked, baffled.

"But you planned it—" I began.

"Come, come, man! You can prove nothing. You have no evidence. You don't know the name I'm using here. You don't know even where you are at this moment, in what city of your charming California this house stands! You're helpless." He paused, thumbing his thin black mustache, and I thought he stifled a sigh. "I shan't harm you. I've sworn to repay your kindness, and my own oaths are sacred things—"

"I want nothing from you," I said hotly. He must have read the hatred in my eyes, for his own gaze narrowed upon me. "For what you've done this day, I'll get you if it takes the rest of my life!"

"Because the girl died—you mean it," he said. "What a pity! Well, it cannot be helped. Even I, who have planned so carefully, make mistakes. For I am careful, my dear Clements—look at Howard Chaffee, whom you treated. He's an American who disappeared many years ago while on an

expedition to Tibet. It has cost me long work and much money to get him here safely. Through him I shall strike Gerard Chaffee, the brother who so injured me. Well—enough of this talk."

He rose, picked up a fresh cigarette, lighted it. I had nothing to say. Virginia Trent was dead; it took the heart out of me.

"You'll be given a hypodermic and then sent back unharmed to the Armistage," he said. "Let me warn you in one respect, Clements. You're safe from me; but if you interfere with my agents, you're not safe from them. That's all."

He went out of the room with swift, silent tread, and the door closed.

I lay in an agony of futility and impotent anger. Everything had opened up, and I realized how impregnable was the man—Ram Lal, the only name I knew for him. His words were true. I did not know where this house stood, what name he used. The tremendous virility of him was overpowering. Had it not been for Virginia's murder, I could almost have sympathized with his lust for vengeance. He had been deeply wronged, were his story true. Now he was an inhuman thing, without conscience, a man from another world, a man from hell itself. . . .

The Rajah from hell!

Abruptly, I became conscious of a life-glow in my fingers and hands. Again I made a spasmodic effort. Those half-cut yet binding cords separated a little more. Another effort—and the cords parted!

My hands were free!

ON the desk was a telephone. Reach it, learn its number—then I would no longer be impotent! Knowledge would arm me to fight this man, to bring him to justice. I was free! The thought was like a star-rocket in my brain.

With a burst of frantic joy, I raised myself and fumbled for the fallen knife. My fingers found it, closed on it. At this instant the door suddenly creaked and swung open. I sank back as I had been, slid the Maratha knife up my sleeve, lay quiet. Into the room returned Ram Lal; with him was the old Hindu I had first seen here.

"Give me the syringe," said my host.

From the old man he took a hypodermic syringe, needle bared, plunger out, and came to my couch. He leaned over me. I thought of Virginia, a crumpled little heap of garments—and then I had him. Flinging up one hand, I caught him about the throat; the cut wrist left a scarlet smear on his golden skin. With the other hand, I plunged the Maratha knife for the heart, thrusting with all my strength.

The steel slid aside; the point would not enter. He wore some protection—

Other men came running. I fought them blindly, furiously, but uselessly; they held me down, Ram Lal leaned over me again and I felt the prick as the needle stabbed home. Then by degrees everything faded away into nothing.

When I wakened, it was to a sunlit room—my own room at the Armitage. The following day, obviously.

Turning my head, I uttered a choked word of incredulity. Sitting beside my bed, reading a newspaper, was Virginia Trent. Impossible! I was out of my head. . . .

"Doctor! Come quickly—he's waked up—"

Her voice was real. A man came, the hotel physician. Presently, the burst of confused questions ended, I was alone with Virginia again, and the amazing reality was fact indeed. That man Chandra had mistaken the nurse for Virginia Trent and had killed the wrong woman.

Beside me on the bed, perhaps as mute evidence of contempt, lay something that had been left here with me—the Maratha knife, complete with shagreen sheath and emerald studs.

I talked everything over with Virginia, of course. The police? I was no such fool. I wanted no publicity, no silly questions.

"England? I'm not going back there, Hugh," Virginia said quietly. "Father is to be buried tomorrow. I'm staying here. Now that everything is definitely known, I must talk with Magruder, with Balfour—"

"You stay out of this business!" I quickly exclaimed. "It's no work for you! This fellow, like most criminals, imagines that he was framed and wronged and handled with cruel injustice; he's out for revenge and is dangerous. You can do nothing, the police can't help us—"

"I'm not thinking of the police," she said and gave me a quick, hard look. "Of Colonel Magruder, first; he'll know what to do. I must talk with him."

"No—not you, but we," I said. "I'll see Magruder; I'll go into this with him full steam. You stay out of it. Your father was my friend and you are more, much more."

Her eyes rested on mine with assent and understanding; then she broke down. After a time, I was alone again. She had gone back to Pasadena. I lay there thinking, thinking, fingering the shagreen haft of the Maratha knife.

Magruder? Yes. There was work to do!

"The Diamond Death," the second of the four stories in this ultra-dramatic series by Gordon Keyne, will appear in our next issue.

How They Kept Christmas

A Quiz by James Aldredge

If you're like everybody else, you will doubtless have every minute planned as to your 1946 Christmas celebration. But supposing the turkey takes longer to roast than you figured on—here's a Yuletide quiz to help you take up that slack time.

(1) He was born on Christmas Day, 1642.

(2) He had to hire a horse and buggy to travel the last five miles of his Christmas journey home, and on this ride he could tell, by counting the bridges, just how soon he would be seeing the brightly illuminated old house and his mother's welcoming face.

(3) He did not settle down to pleasant holiday festivities, but on Christmas night brought his army across an ice-jammed river to spring a surprise raid upon the unsuspecting enemy.

(4) He never forgot the Christmas morning when another boy, going by his home on a sleigh with his father and a barrel full of apples, chanced to see him, and dug into the barrel to heave him an apple for the sake of the day.

(5) He threw a whirlwind of parties all through the Christmas holidays to celebrate the publication of a story that he had just written—a story that all readers agreed had caught the full spirit of the season.

(6) He once sent Jenny Lind as a Christmas gift an album of his songs, on the cover of which he made delightful drawings of a piano, a railway train, a loaf of Swedish bread, and a gayly decorated Christmas tree, such as he provided for his children.

It's all about famous folk and the way they once kept the holiday. Count 10 for each one you can name. If you finish with a score of 80 or better, your standing as an expert rates a twenty-one sleigh-bell salute!

Answers will be found on page 86.

(7) He was a guest from overseas at a fine old English country-house, and early on Christmas morning he was serenaded by the small children of the home, who went to the doors of all the guest-chambers, singing carols.

(8) He was another overseas visitor, and after he had watched the lights turned on the National Christmas Tree in Washington and was pressed for a speech, he said: "I spend this anniversary and festival far from my country, far from my family; and yet I cannot truthfully say that I feel far from home. . . . In God's mercy, a happy Christmas to you all!"

(9) He was not satisfied with the turkey that his newspaper-employer always gave him for Christmas, but threw a hint that he preferred a new suit; whereupon the owner, hopeful of getting even with this famous joker, sent him a convict's suit, little knowing that the other would keep it and put it on whenever important friends of the proprietor came to the office!

(10) He had already retired on Christmas Eve when, near midnight, the singing of "O Come, All Ye Faithful" was heard on the lawn beneath his bedroom; donning a dressing-gown, the listener leaned out of a window to enjoy the first Yuletide caroling ever heard on the grounds of the White House.

Signals Over!

By W. C. Cornish

FOOTBALL is still fresh in our minds, and many of you follow the sport religiously. You'll be front-running in this quiz, maybe! But other grid fans are less certain of some

of the plays and the situations, though they've heard the names and phrases. Can you define them?

Ten of the twelve is tops.

Signals! Formation right! . . . Hup!

1. Why is a certain play called the "Statue of Liberty"?
2. If you are mousetrapped, what's happened to you?
3. Are you a bench-warmer, and if so, what are you?
4. What is a "Monday-morning quarterback"?
5. "This fellow is a grandstander!" What's that?
6. How did a play called "Sally Rand" get in here? What is it?

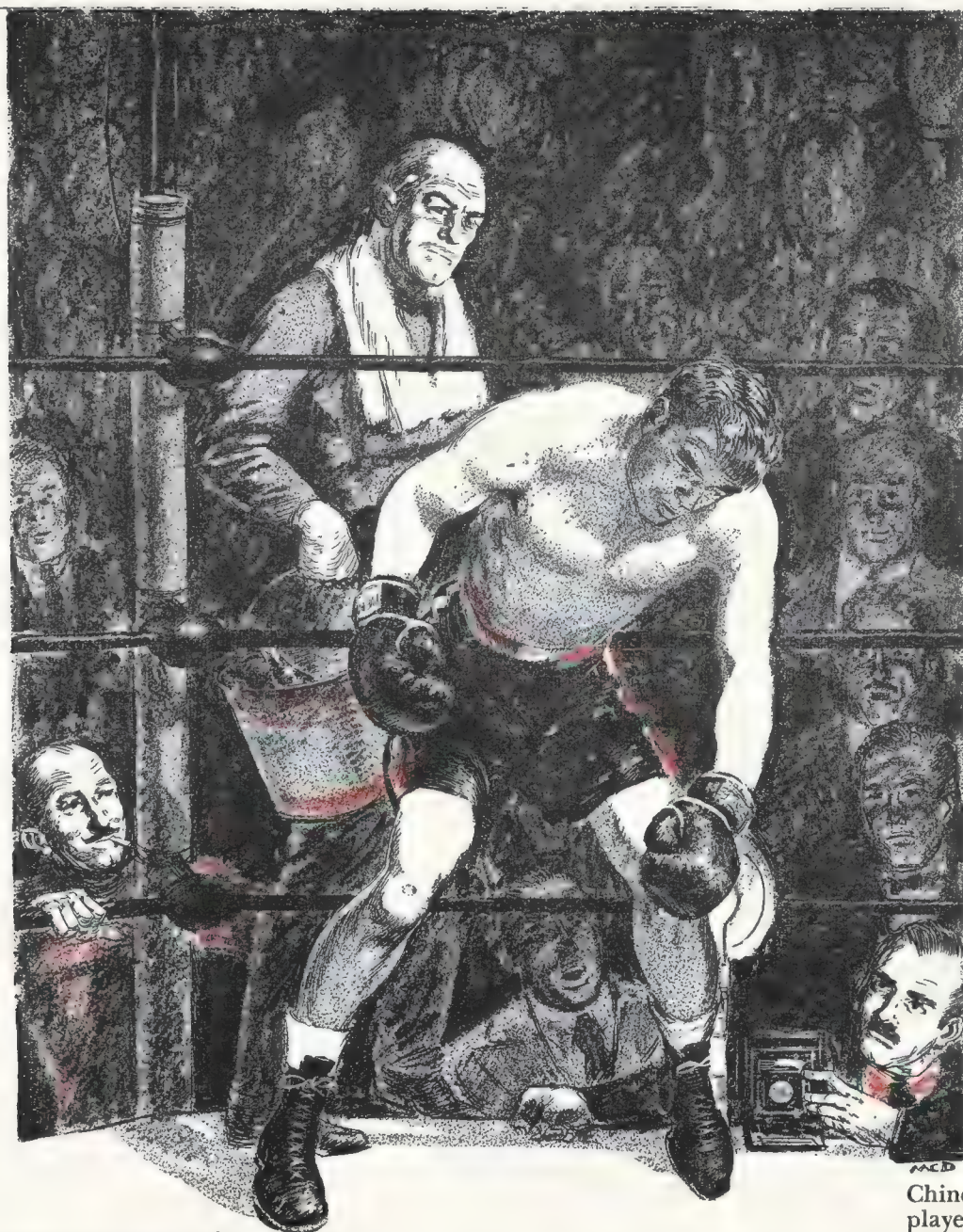
7. The Flea-Flicker originated in the Midwest. It is—
8. "Take the subway" suggests what to linemen?
9. What do you think 7-1-2-1 might mean?
10. To "shovel it," in football, has nothing to do with coal! It means—
11. A cross-country All-American might be—
12. Who is a Ghost Back?

(Answers on page 86)

The

Willy Boulder might have echoed the cynic's saying, "God save me from my friends—I can defend myself against my enemies." But he soon learned to tell real friend from real foe.

by JOEL
REEVE



Willy staggered a little, as though everything was blurry.

THAT year the expression "Everything is chicken," was rife. And on the *de luxe* train going South, Willy Boulder, middleweight champion boxer, thought uneasily of the phrase as applied to his current situation. He had never been on the West Coast of Florida, and this was a business trip, to box a Latin boy named Milo Concertina, to pick up a little change—and most of all, to rest from a hard campaign which had eaten up nearly all of 1940.

Pat Hafey said: "Pay attention. . . . You shouldn't think so hard, Willy. Fighters should never think." He was kidding, but in his heart the wise little manager knew sadly that he was right. While Willy was a young, strong boy, coming up the

swift, hard way, all had indeed been chicken, despite setbacks, despite hard times. But now that the title was won, and Willy was betrothed to Mary Carson, and the taxicab business back in the home town of Midburgh made monetary want impossible, and Pat himself was married to Sue and the proud father of a girl and a very new baby boy—now that they had things, they could sit around and worry about the world. For it was not a good world in 1940, and Pat Hafey was a man to look about and know this was true. Born in 1900, Pat Hafey had missed fighting in the First World War by a year; but he could see, with his shrewd, sharp eyes that trouble was brewing for Willy, for all the young who had come along after 1918.

America was recovering from the Recession, but already in Europe dire happenings had cast their evil spell.

Willy played a card. He said: "Go ahead, pick up a bundle." It was

Chinese rummy, the kind where a player could pick all the discards back to the one he needed. Willy said: "I want to get married, settle down in Midburgh and raise a family. You have a family, haven't you? Why can't I have one?"

Pat said: "I want you to have one. I'm neglectin' Charley Hose and Kid Atkins and all the others to make this trip with you. The South has never seen you box, and this trip should make you independent and safe." He choked over the last word. A newspaper lay on the seat beside him, the headlines shrieking the name "Hitler," making the word *safe* a mockery.

Willy said: "Okay, I'll take the ten, and that's it, brother. I'm rum."

Pat said: "You're too lucky." Again he bit his lips, totaling the score. The train came into Savannah and backed for a mile or so into the station. They put aside the cards and walked on the platform for a moment.

Willy Boulder's face was open and pleasant; and in his twenty-fifth year

Champ Goes South

there was no guile in him. Slight lumps of cartilage over his eyes only added to a rakishness which was attractive and boyish. His skin was smooth and brown and hard, and his teeth were even and white, smiling at a small man who gaped, recognizing him.

Pat Hafey, blond, a bit bald, also failed to show many signs of the fact that he had boxed four lightweight champions without losing—or winning. Pat was forty and worrying about his waistline, which was now thirty instead of its normal twenty-seven inches. He too radiated a sort of honest, straightforward aura which seemed to illumine both the men whose partnership was a byword in the seamy annals of Fistianana.

THE small man came up and said: "I didn' know you was on the train, Champ. Hiya, Hafey?" He seemed to dismiss Pat with this salutation, addressing himself solely to Willy. He wore Broadway clothing. Willy had seen him before, and vaguely remembered him as one of the Jacobs Beach mob, a gambler of sorts. He was a flashy little man with a large nose which presided over a mustache adorned with wax, a ridiculous ornament to a mouselike but strong face. He said: "I know you are goin' South, Champ. I hear it along the Beach; and I say, Jake ol' boy, I say, here is a chance to get outa the rut and make a piece of change. So I hop the rattler, and here I am. I'll buy you a drink, Champ."

"I'm off the stuff," said Willy. "Training, you know."

"G'an," said the little man. His name, Willy now remembered, was Jake—Jake Tingle. Someone once opined that Jacobs Beach was named after him instead of the original Jacobs, because Tingle had always been on it. Infesting it, some wise guy had added. "You don't need to be in shape to take these Crackers. I been down here, pal—I been down here. Umpchays." He kept talking to Willy and excluding Pat, even taking Willy's elbow in a nervous grasp. They were walking along the platform toward the station.

A party got off the club car and a loud-voiced man said: "There'sh Boulder. I tol' ya the bum was onna train." He was very drunk.

Pat, always alert, annoyed and amused by the little man from the

Beach, edged cautiously forward. Willy had been the champion long enough to ignore the drunks, but you never knew. . . .

A woman said, "Oh, he's *cute*."

The loud-voiced man was big and rangy and had a scar over his left eye. He said: "Oh, you think so, huh? I'll show you how *cute*!"

He was coming forward, and there were two others with him who protested in lesser voices, but could not restrain him. The two others were also drunk, but they seemed to have more balance. Willy was facing them and a crowd gathered like magic. Pat went into action, shoving Jake Tingle aside with a deft elbow. The man was ugly enough and big enough to cause real trouble. He was swarthy and long-armed. The woman's nostrils flared with interest, and the helmet of her brazen hair shone dully in the light. A trainman said ineffectually: "Here! Here!"

The woman was good-looking in a theatrical, overdone way. The big man could walk straight, and his fists were clenched, and he was coming away from his friends and at Willy. Pat Hafey got smoothly in between and said: "Okay, pal. Take it easy."

"Okay, my maiden aunt's foot!" said the big man. "That bum can't run out on my pal Bud Gorner. Bud Gorner can take that cheese champ—"

Pat said: "Sure, we know it. But keep it quiet, will you?" It was one way to handle them, patiently agreeing, getting them away. If Willy turned and ran, that would never do—the public would hate him; if he stood and fought, he was a bully.

The big man said: "And to hell with you, too!" He wound up a fast one and pitched it at Pat.

Pat slid away from the punch, and reluctantly his hands came up. It would be his knuckles against a hard jaw, his can in the local pokey if the cops came. He had to protect Willy.

There was a small rush past Hafey. The little man named Tingle skidded to a stop alongside the belligerent one. From his pocket he produced a wadded newspaper. He rolled it deftly as he ran, and slapped it against the big man's ear in a sort of burlesque effort. He was so little a man, and the other was so large, that people exploded in relieved laughter.

In another moment they were staring in disbelief. The big man was collapsing. He turned, staggered a

step, fell into the hands of his two friends, who had with great presence of mind leaped to his side. They bore him, toes dragging, toward the nearest Pullman.

Pat had Willy away before the action had quite stopped. They climbed into the car and sat staring at one another. Then Pat said: "Things like that will happen. It's part of being champ."

"I know," said Willy listlessly. He was staring at marching men giving the stiff-arm salute to the mustached puppet-figure. The newspaper picture was blurred, but the comedy of Hitler was beginning to wear thin. Drums were beating somewhere. Willy said: "All those people—drinking in the bar. Raising hell—or attending to business. Like us. . . . What will happen to them?"

"I tell you, a fighter mustn't think of—" The door to the compartment popped open, and Jake Tingle, his eyes twinkling, edged in. He sat down and mopped his brow.

"That was Buster England. The playboy! Him and that broad, Inez Tolliver—she is strictly from Dixie, but a torch singer, yuh know?" The little man said: "I'll still buy a drink. . . . England's got a piece o' Gorner. He's a bum!"

"You got the mace into that newspaper okay," said Pat grudgingly. "It's bad for business when I have to hit them."

"Think not of it," said Tingle. "It is on the house, yet!" The porter came, and he sent for drinks. He was with them, and Pat shrugged acceptance of the situation. He had certainly acted in their interest, promptly and with dispatch. He was a bore and an insufferable wise guy. He even knew the inside on Hitler—Berlin was full of effeminate men, and in spite of the war machine now twisting the arm of Europe, the whole thing would collapse, he averred, because, "Sissies can't run no wars."

Willy winked. Pat went out, leaving the little man with the champ. Anything to keep him amused, to keep the sound of the drums out of his ears, Pat thought. For now, anyway—for this little time.

IN Tampa the promoter was a pleasant fellow named Harry Weevil, and he was assisted by the inevitable Latin, a voluble, handsome man called Manny Garcia. They made Willy

and Pat very welcome, although they were a bit puzzled by Jake Tingle. There was no getting rid of Jake. He had attached himself to the champ. He moved into the Tampa House and took a suite next to the one Pat had rented. He was not a party-thrower, and drank with good sense on his own part; and Pat could think of no reason for objecting to him. He explained to the promoters that Tingle was a friend from New York.

"A gambler," nodded Garcia. "He has been here before."

Pat explained carefully: "We do not train with gamblers as a rule. We met on the train."

"Why, certainly," said Garcia affably. "Think nothing of it!"

Pat winced, but Willy Boulder said: "I'd like to see the gym and train a little this week."

Garcia said: "Train? Well—of course. We have heard that you fight on the level. There has been bad promotion here, and many big-timers have thought they were here merely to give exhibitions, you understand?" He held his nose between thumb and forefinger.

Pat said emphatically: "Have your local man ready. Willy will definitely kayo him within five rounds." He always put that one out; then if the boy stayed six or seven, the local sports writers could write about something.

Garcia permitted himself an expansive smile. "Milo? He is ready, gentlemen."

Weevil, a large, important man, came bustling up and said: "Got to go. Got to see about some tickets. Got a million things to do, gents. Manny'll take care of you. Big deal, gotta get the mob out to pay fer it." He went steaming away.

Garcia said: "Milo is maybe tougher than you think, gentlemen. I doubt that you will knock him out in five rounds—or ten. Milo is a strong boy, and very willing to fight."

"He has a good record," said Pat uninterestedly. "Can we have dinner sent up here? I'm afraid—some people downstairs I don't want to see."

"But certainly," said Garcia. At the door he paused and said slowly: "I am glad you take your bout seriously, Champ. Milo is a good boy." He seemed anxious to put over some important point. He stared at them from a round, brown, worried face, then disappeared.

Willy chuckled: "Have you checked the record of this Concertina?"

"A good boy. Florida middle champ. . . . He's kayoed thirty or forty prelim boys. You know the type." Pat turned away his face. He would have to go down to the newspaper and get the straight dope on this Concertina. It was a danger they always faced, barnstorming a section of the country. The local yokel some-



Reluctantly Pat's hands came up. He had to protect Willy.

times was a sleeper. Willy could handle them—but no fighter was ever sharp day after day on a trip of this sort—not even Willy.

They ate, and went to see "Philadelphia Story" at the local motion-picture house, and the champagne scene reduced them to convulsive laughter. They had known James Stewart in Hollywood, and his success in the picture pleased them. They went down to the newspaper office; and smiling, genial Skeet Morton said that Milo Concertina was rough and tough and able. He said: "Milo may lack class, but he makes it up in will-iness. I thought you boys knew this was to be a real fight. They're paying you real money!"

Pat said smoothly: "We want a real fight. But we want to know the score. It was hinted that this Milo was a ringer."

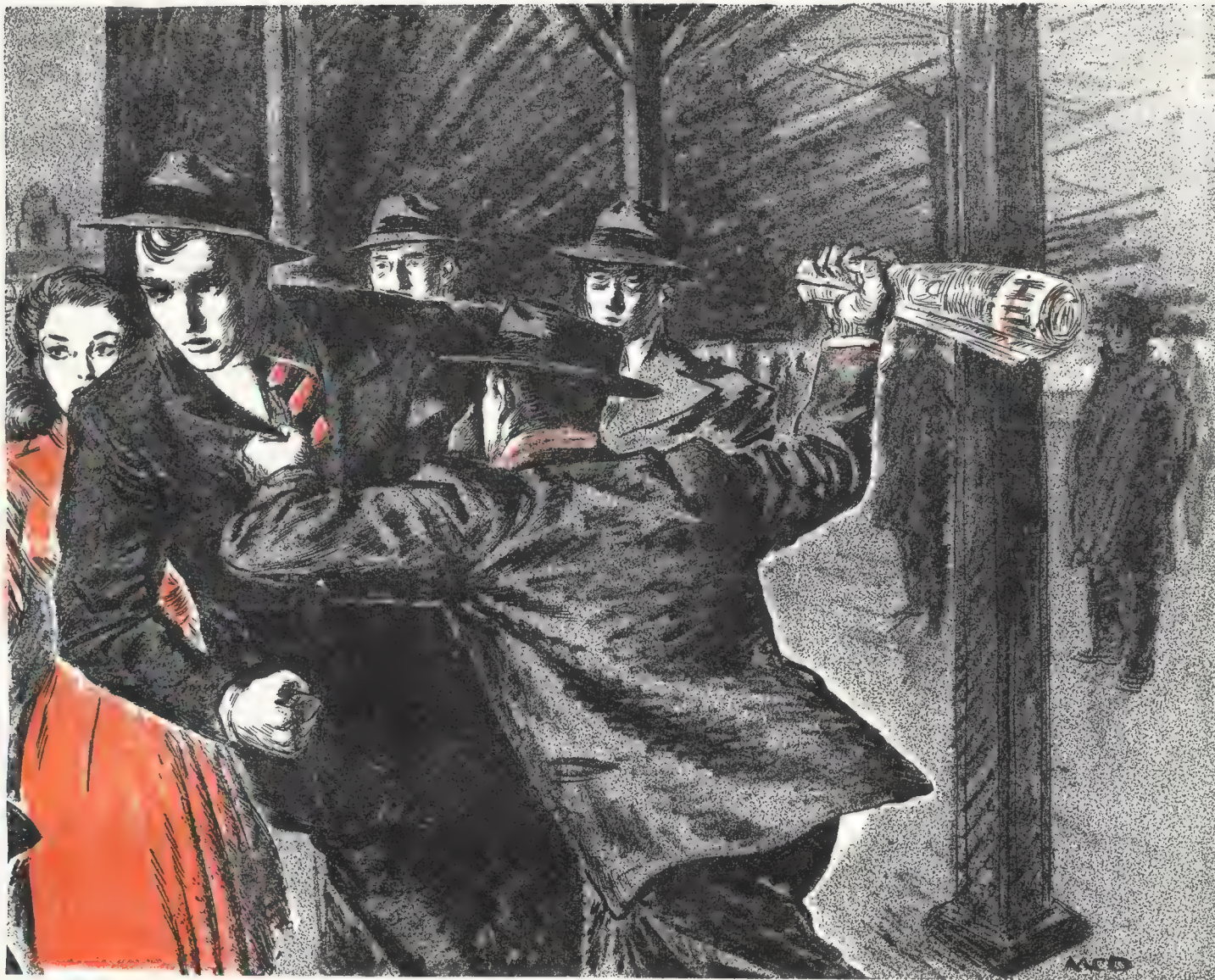
"Just a good boy," said Skeet. "Weevil is really behind his manager, Cat Aletto. You know how those things are."

Pat said weakly: "Yeah. We know." They talked of other things, then went back to the hotel.

Willy said, as they crossed the lobby, past the open door of a grill where people danced and an orchestra was rather raucous: "I see our friend from Savannah is present."

THE slight figure of Jake Tingle appeared as if by magic. "I am looking all over for you. . . . I am hearing Milo Concertina is a tough punk. I am laughing myself sick, naturally, and betting off my head. . . . Do you get a load of this Buster England? Him and his stooges, Dud Egan and Kit Mayer! A dime a dozen, them playboys. His doll, this Inez Tolliver, is singin' in the trap. . . . Have a drink and get a slant at 'em makin' whoopee, Champ. On me."

Pat said: "He has to get to bed." But it was not any use. Jake had been of service to them on the Savannah platform, and Willy could not resist



Then a small rush and the little man named Tingle skidded to a stop alongside the belligerent one.

him without feeling guilty. And if Willy felt guilty, some day he would find the opportunity of repaying Jake with some grand gesture which might hurt. So Pat followed grimly, although he had intended to write to his fine wife Sue, asking about Sue Jr. and stout young Willy Hafey.

The England party was large and loud. The big man glared over at them as Jake demanded, and got, a table placed on the edge of the dance-floor—where the band leader beamed upon them, and the drummer gave them a raffle and then it was a baby spot and the championship stuff again. Willy had never learned to bask in it, but he could accept it gracefully, mitting them, bowing, smiling his youthful grin. Pat, long accustomed to it, nevertheless decried Jake's methods, Jake's monkeylike sycophancy.

The woman sang into the microphone, but her amused eyes went beyond, to Willy, and the song, "When You Wish Upon a Star" seemed to be what they called "dedicated" to the

champion. The Southern folks who frequented the place were openly friendly and interested, and the Yankee tourists curious and slightly contemptuous.

Jake Tingle was in his element. He talked loudly of betting coups, of the coming fight, and how much he would wager at what odds that Willy would kayo this local yokel, this joker from Jokeville. His humor was heavy, his tone insulting; but the polite Southerners just smiled, and one said: "Milo's no world-beater, but he can hit as hard as any man."

"With either hand," said another earnestly. "Don't be fooled, Champ."

The woman sang again, and then paused by the table. She said: "Nice to see you again, Champ."

Willy said gently: "Nice to hear you sing."

She said: "This isn't the Big Time, but we all have to hit the sticks once in a while, don't we?"

Willy said: "Why, sure—" She smiled at him; and at the table where

Buster England and his cohorts sat she was greeted with jeers. But she sat with them and said nothing, looking at Willy with that hungry look such women have when they feel themselves slipping.

AT one o'clock Pat could stand no more of it. Jake was telling them how he had bet ten thousand dollars on Tunney at Philadelphia because Greb knew that Tunney had come along and Dempsey had gone back. Pat said: "Harry knew it, all right. But he paid for the knowledge by getting beat to death by Gene, and he didn't tell you or anyone else like you that he was betting against Dempsey that time."

He got up and said: "I don't mean to crab your story, Jake. But Willy has to go to bed, and all this con talk is getting us nowhere."

At that instant the familiar, ugly voice of Buster England was raised to catch the ears of all. "I'll bet a thousand dollars, even money, that the

local boy goes the distance with that cheese champ!"

Jake, swinging his belligerence away from Pat, poured it onto the big New Yorker. He said: "That I'll take. You wanna make it some more? Cheese you will eat, big boy. One gee, right?" He had his hands full of bills, like magic, waving them under the nose of the dark man. Pat and Willy escaped.

THE training gym was an unfinished loft over a garage. All Ybor City came to see the champion train, and Willy stared at dark faces, gleaming brown eyes, wavy black hair worn long and thick. The liquid splash of the Spanish language was soft on the balmy November air. It was quite warm in Tampa, like Jung back home. There were hibiscus bushes, and the poinsettia grew in profusion instead of in a pot for five bucks at Christmas time in Midburgh. He had enjoyed what he saw of West Coast Florida, and now he saw Milo Concertina.

The lithe, brown-skinned challenger was taller than Willy, and he was sleek, like a feline—a large, capable feline. He smiled easily, and had only one mark, a shelf over his left eye. He shook hands, explaining that he had finished his workout and was proud to turn the gym over to Willy. "We'll have a nice bout, huh?" he said, almost mischievously.

Willy said: "Sure, Milo. Glad to have seen you." He liked the lean boy, but it was no good showing that before the crowd. A champion had to be brusque and businesslike. He undressed, and there were several boys to box him when he had warmed up on the bags, but not a good one—just local kids, who longed to say they had put them on with the champ.

He came out into the warmth, and it was steaming, after his blood was stirred. He wanted to sleep. His mind was languorous, and Pat's sharp insistence that Concertina was a better fighter than they had been led to believe made no impression on him. He went up to his hotel room and immediately slept.

It was cooler in the evening, and he wrote to Mary Carson, telling her that he had a good bout in prospect, that he was getting seven thousand dollars, and would be in Miami the next week, with a purse of equal proportions offered. Then he would go to Savannah. . . . He stopped writing an itinerary and tried to tell her how much he missed her and that he wanted to marry her soon. He was not any good at that sort of writing, although he could talk it out with her any time.

He enclosed a note for Sue Faye Hafey, the serene wife of Pat, who had always been his steady influence. The new baby was named for him, "Willy Patrick Hafey"—the middle

name for its father, but the first name for the champ. It made him feel good, and he went down to dinner radiating cheerfulness.

Jake Tingle was right on deck, his waxed mustache quivering. Pat was somewhere doing business, but Jake had them a center table in the grill, and a man played the piano, but Inez sang for supertime too. She smiled so insistently at Willy that he had to respond out of courtesy; and then she came over and sat with them.

Jake kept talking in his inimitable and slightly unpleasant fashion. "It looks like I am taking one gee from your boy friend, huh, babe? Such a sharp character, he is! Always talking with his mouth."

Inez said indifferently: "He can afford to lose."

"And I can't?" Jake laughed softly. "Money I will have when that playboy is muscling drinks offen his betters. Him and his Bud Gorner, that bum."

Willy said: "Bud is a pretty good middleweight."

"With that glass in his chin?" Jake scoffed. "A tanker, yet."

Willy said: "You shouldn't call him a tanker, Jake. A tanker takes dives. Bud is not a tanker. He is a pretty good middle."

Jake said to the girl: "You see? That is the champ. Always giving a slob a break. You tell your playboy, he is monkeying with a real champ, see?"

She said to Willy: "Is he always around? Can you ever have any conversation of your own?"

"Oh, well," Willy grinned. "I haven't anything to say."

She arose. "That I doubt. . . . Have you a song you'd like me to sing?"

Willy said: "My girl and I like to dance to 'Whispering.' Do you sing that old one?"

"For you I'll sing it," she smiled, ignoring the way Willy had slid in a reference to Mary. She had hips which swayed like a camel's hump, and he remembered the circus parades of his youth and grinned. Her red lips parted, and she sang in a husky, reminiscent voice. She was quite good, Willy thought, and he wondered why she had left New York. He had heard worse in big clubs up there.

Jake said: "You wanna look out, a babe like that. And her boy friend."

"Don't be a damn' fool," said Willy sharply.

"Does she go for you?" said Jake admiringly.

"You've got a mind like an open sewer," said Willy. But he could not be angry at Jake. He listened to the song and thought of Mary.

There was much ado, and Buster England came in. He seemed quite sober, and was younger than Willy had thought. He had been a foot-

ball player at some Ivy League college, and he still had that athlete's swagger, although his waistline had swollen a bit. He took a table near the floor, and applauded vigorously as Inez finished Willy's song; but when she ignored him and smiled brightly at Willy, he stared over, glowering with a child's sullenness. He was the victim of too much money, too much unearned adulation. He was a slightly ridiculous figure in a world which had begun to crumble.

Jack Tingle said: "That jerk." He touched the ends of his mustache. "It oney wish he would bet another grand. You will positively put this Milo away, huh, Willy? Not that I doubt you."

Willy said: "We never guarantee anything to the gamblers, Jake."

"Sure, sure," said Jake. "I know, I know! But a pal, huh?"

"No guarantees," Willy repeated, smiling but insistent. "You pays your money, and you takes your choice."

Jake said: "Is right, too. . . . I got confidence, Champ. Strickly I got confidence. This Milo, a local bum, what can he do?"

"He can fight," said Willy. He looks it, and his record says so."

Jake made a deprecatory motion. "So he can fight! A local bum—you, the champeen. He wouldn't dare win!"

Willy said: "I wish you would stop talking like that. He would damned well dare kayo me in the first, if that's what you mean. We don't put the fix in, and you know it."

Jake said: "I know, I know! But a local boy, oney seven gees in it for you, why should you take chances?"

PAT was coming in, and Willy was glad not to pursue the conversation with the insistent little gambler. Pat's face was solemn. He sat down and ordered, and after a few moments he said: "Concertina is training secretly. Skeet tipped me off, and I strolled over to Ybor City. I watched through a window."

Jake said: "You seen nothin'."

"I saw a good boxer with a tremendous wallop in either hand," said Pat.

Willy said quietly: "Good enough?"

"If you were sharp, Willy, it would be nothing. But these trips—you can't stay in top shape." Pat was worried. It shone out of him.

Jake said: "The local bum trains. So what? Is a joke!"

Pat dropped the subject, but his glance at Willy was meaningful. Jake talked on, and when the check came, Jake grabbed it and loudly paid it, so that everyone knew he was a pal of the champ. They had to pass England's table on the way out. Egan and Mayer sat expressionless, and Inez was next to the playboy, enigmatically smiling up at Willy.

England shoved back his chair and got to his feet, glowering at them. Willy scowled right back; then remembered that he was the champ and turned away, quickly moving past. Pat covered his swift escape, but it was Jake who paused, allowing both Pat and Willy to escape behind him. Jake snarled: "You wanna lay some more dough, huh?"

England said in a light, sober voice: "Now that I've seen Concertina, I'll take odds he wins the fight. Do you want to make it attractive?"

Jake said: "That's a kind of talk I like to hear. I'll lay—" Pat led Willy beyond earshot and sighed.

"The little jerk comes in handy, at that," he said. "I don't like any part of him, but he sure has saved us embarrassment. Do you know what he wants now? The little character says he has always longed to work a corner for a fighter. Just swing a towel. You don't need a license in Florida—not a real one—so I don't know how to tell him no."

"Let him do it," said Willy amusedly. "I'd like that spiked mustache in my corner. It'll be a first in ring history. 'Waxed Mustache Lucky Charm, Says Champ.' It may be an angle."

He went to bed early, but somehow he did not sleep. The sleek, smiling Milo Concertina was in his mind's eye. The heckling of Buster England was responsible for it, of course. And even Pat had said the boy was good with either hand. No fighter with a punch is ever to be discounted in advance, Willy well knew.

He tossed on the sheets. It was cool enough at night, but his nerves were crawling too close to the surface of his skin. There had been no nerves in Willy until he had won the championship, but lately they had made themselves evident. So much depended upon his holding the crown—his life with Mary, the taxi business in Midburgh, the big bout next summer when he would really cash in fighting in the ball-park in New York and be independent for life. He would retire, then, while he had his wits, and before some aspiring young lad came along to beat out his brains and mash his countenance out of shape.

He would retire then if he still held the title, if some joker did not get him beforehand. This Milo Concertina—what a name! Right at the beginning that Manny Garcia had sounded a warning note. . . . And then Buster England with his hard cash. . . . Although the woman Inez had said Buster could afford it, meaning he could afford to lose. . . . Why did the woman look at him all the time, that

"Then I saw that honest Manny Garcia remonstrating with you."



way? It wasn't his manly charms, he knew. She had a reason—all women of her kind had reasons for what they did.

He got out of bed. He put on a pair of slacks, loafer slippers, a T-shirt. He eased out of the room and went down in the elevator. The operator looked dubiously at him. He shrugged his way out of the hotel and walked the streets. Easy-going downtown Tampa was friendly, and he liked it.

He kept looking in the windows of the lighted restaurants and lunch-rooms, where men sat in groups, or in pairs, talking. He walked clean out of the downtown district, and then for a long time he just covered ground, running a hundred yards, walking a hundred yards. He saw a large sign and turned right. He was on Broadway, which was Ybor City, which was the section from which came his opponent, Milo Concertina.

He kept walking and running and looking in the windows. It was all right, and he was sweating, which was what he had wanted. He kept moving easily on his strong legs. It was in the largest and flashiest restaurant, called the Columbia, a world-famed establishment, that he saw England and Inez Tolliver and the crowd. He lingered, nose pressed to the window, staring. Then he turned and trotted briskly for the hotel.

His nerves were all right, and he slept late the next morning; for on the following night was the bout at the football field.

LIGHTS of the football field shone brightly, and they had pitched the ring down at the end, and of course brought in the arc-lights which beat whitely down on the canvas. The West Coast people had paid seventeen thousand dollars gross, which was enough. The fat man, Weevil, was briefly present, then gone. Manny Garcia remained, talking gayly. "You see, the local boy helped the draw. He is in wonderful shape, Champ. You'll have a beautiful bout. He is very good, as I told you. I understand there is much money bet on Milo. People are taking the odds."

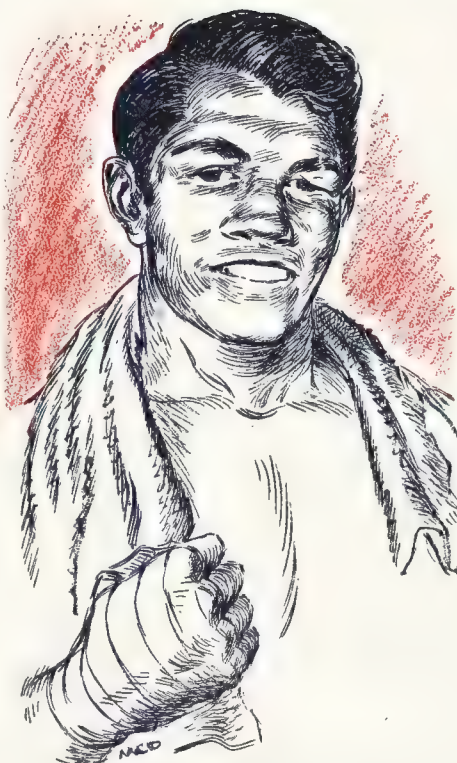
Pat said: "You mean a last minute switch, Garcia?"

Jake Tingle said: "Yeah. This I got to see. I got money yet to bet. Who will take maybe two to one?"

"Plenty of people," said Garcia, nodding brightly. "It is good, eh?"

Jake said: "Lemme go find these yokels!" He was wearing a turtle-neck sweater of a bright hue, with white flannel slacks and rubber-soled shoes. He was like a bright bird, hopping about the dressing-room. He was defiant; he was a motion-picture second.

Pat said seriously: "Something is screwy. The local gamblers can't be



"We'll have a nice bout, huh?" Milo said, almost mischievously.

that dumb. . . . But Weevil is behind Aletto, who is Concertino's manager. Willy, I do not like this."

Willy said calmly: "Forget it, Pat."

The bottle rattled in the pail as Jake practised handling them. The little gambler said: "What can they do us? Willy will murder this bum."

Pat said: "England has bet a small fortune. . . . If there is some kind of fix in here, we are out of luck, Willy. Florida has no State commission."

"It's all right," said Willy. He watched Jake amusedly. The boy came in with saucer eyes and said that it was time. Willy got up and put his robe over his shoulders. The night air was cool as he walked across the grass to the ring. The crowd shouted, but then the local boy entered the ring and the crowd really went wild.

Willy kept his eyes on Jake. The little man put the pail down and strutted, staring at the mob. He loved the limelight. He was a bantam rooster challenging the barnyard.

The referee was a big man, solemn, the best in the South, they said. He gave the instructions in a soft voice. Milo looked fine. He had the whitest teeth Willy had ever seen. His manager was a small, worried man. The manager seemed frightened. At ring-side, big Weevil wheezed into a box. Willy looked down and saw Buster England, Inez and the two stooges in the same box. Willy grinned, and the woman started to smile in return, then stopped herself and looked away, over at Milo.

Willy went back and tried the ropes. There were all the preparations, the

long trips, the workouts, the talk and chatter and stuff—and then there was this. There was this moment which found him alone, gloved hands on the ropes, going through the time-honored motions of trying them. His face was toward the sky, past the white lights, to where a dignified moon rode proudly upon a cloud. This was the moment of sincerity, when he was about to engage in the old ritual of crossing gloves, when the issue was in doubt and he knew nothing of what his opponent had, but only knew his own strength and intent. He waited for the bell, savoring the moment. He was in his eighth year of boxing; he was a world's champion, but still there was this moment when he was an acolyte at the altar of his primal profession. . . .

And then the bell rang, and he was slipping out, on his toes, watchful, hands high, left feeling like the antenna of an insect, probing, wondering, trying this alert, eager, younger boy who had speed and strength to match that of any middleweight Willy had ever seen. Milo came in strong, unafraid. His own left hooked, missing, then hooked again with incredible catlike speed, with power to burn.

Willy caught the second hook on the peg. He let his own right drop in a short, an unspectacular blow. But the ribs of the challenger reddened at once, and he danced, grinning past his mouthpiece. Willy shuffled, his hands going out, delicately, boxing. He had the motion and the rhythm of a champion, and the fans were tense, watching. They could feel it, of course, as you can always feel the performance of an artist. They saw the gloves rake Milo, drive him side-wise. They saw Milo, with courage superb fight back with both hands, each loaded.

There was a slight mark high on Willy's cheek. Milo's nose was in the way of a straight one. Milo bled a little. He kept snuffling it, frowning. He did not like to bleed, Willy thought.

The round ended, and Willy sat on the stool while the boy walked all the way across the ring to find his corner. Pat said: "This boy is good and strong. He takes it nice."

Willy said: "He also dishes it out."

JAKE was swinging a towel as if there were a Spanish bull in the ring and he the toreador. He almost slapped a corner of it into Willy's eye, but Pat blocked him off. Pat was talking slowly, easily, telling Willy that he had to keep boxing until Milo tired. There was too much dynamite in those fists to walk in and try for a kayo, Pat thought.

For once Jake was silent. It was strange, but he had nothing to offer. Of course Pat had admonished him

that he must not offer advice, but had not expected the loquacious little man to concur. The whistle sounded, and Jake swung down with the pail like a monkey. Willy bit on the rubber and got up.

He almost got smothered. Milo Concertina was across the ring and in Willy's corner. He was pouncing like a tiger. His arms swung in short arcs; and for a brief moment in terror, Willy thought the brown gloves were leaded. The punches stunned him, sent him against the ropes. The crowd was on its feet, roaring deep in its collective throat. The rabbit had carried the fight to the fox.

THE challenger stepped back. He was expecting Willy to cover up under the attack and seek the ropes. All the other boys, the ones he had knocked out, had covered under his attack. His brown eyes were gleaming, watchful; his young face was no longer pleasant. His gloves were poised to administer the pay-off punch that would bring him a title, fame, fortune.

Willy stepped forward. His left dropped to the belly; his right crushed upward. He forced, his other foot coming behind, his shoulders bulling. His head dipped as a trickle of blood came from the corner of his mouth. He slid sidewise, walking out of it, straightening. His left hand shot out.

Milo Concertina ran into the left hand. It was like encountering the edge of a door in the dark. He ducked and lunged, still strong, although the body blow had made him gasp, the right hand staggered him. He was as brave as a lion. The left caught that shelf which was the only sign of his previous encounters, that bit of cartilage over his left eye. The glove of the champion moved, like a brush in the hands of a skilled painter, only faster.

The gore streamed down. In Milo's corner Cat Aletto groaned. His hand went to the collodion bottle, gripped it. This he had feared, and for this he had sent Milo out for that quick kayo.

The round ended. Willy sat down and took a deep swig of the water bottle Jake offered. He spat the water into a pail, careful not to swallow any, and said: "That's quite a boy over there."

"You better unload on him," said Pat. "He totes too many guns. You better quit boxing and unload."

"It's all right," said Willy. "But if we have to fight something like this all over the South, it won't be easy."

Pat said humorously: "Hell, it's a tough racket, pal." There was a reason for their badinage. They knew the fight was tough, and they talked it down, but each understood the other. Willy never took his eyes from Jake's comic, bouncing figure.

The third round and the fourth were good rounds, with clean punching. Milo did not win either, but he was in there trying. He kept losing the white bandage on the first punch of each round, as Willy would nail him; then he would bleed and bravely fight. He was very brave.

It was the fifth coming up. Jake was dancing, worrying. He came in and handed Willy the bottle. He leaned close to Willy and said: "When you gonna take this chump, ha?" He slapped Willy on the back. It was time for Willy to swallow some of the water, as he was thoroughly dehydrated. He leaned forward and spat at the pail.

Willy said: "Maybe he'll last, Jake. He is very good."

"My dough," moaned Jake. "I bet—"

Pat said: "Shut up, Jake. . . . I think you should keep a little to his left, where he can't see you operating, Willy."

The bell clanged. Willy looked at Jake, down at the edge of the apron. He crossed his eyes, looking at his nose. He uncrossed them. He staggered a little, as though everything was blurry. He managed a look of surprise.

He turned and listlessly lifted his hands as the boy came, pausing at such laggard tactics, suspicious, not anxious now to rush into the champion's terrain, careful, gaining experience each round. Willy staggered a step to the left. The boy turned, stabbing a left.

WILLY went past the left, throwing his right. It slid under the boy's guard and hit his stomach. Milo turned a little, retching. Willy hit him again in the middle, not liking it too much, but recognizing the strength of the boy's jaw. Milo bent, like a reed in a gale.

Willy crouched, his heels coming down. His left fist went in to the side of the jaw. His right crashed on the chin. He delivered a last one, overhand, a blow which landed at the base of the jaw.

Milo Concertina folded upon his face. He laid his cheek against the canvas, and his eyes were closed tight. He stayed there, on his side, without moving. The referee counted to ten, and then lifted Willy's hand in victory. . . .

The referee seemed unhappy. He had been in on the betting coup, if not the plot, Willy guessed. Willy laughed a little, hurrying across the grass again, then into his clothing. He had a cab waiting, and he chivvied Jake and Pat into it, and they went down to the hotel and into the grill-room.

Inez Tolliver had just finished a song. She was sitting down with

Buster England, who was drunk. The two stooges got up as Jake came in with Willy. England said heatedly: "You dirty double-crossin', low-down little—"

Jake said: "I took your money? I did you something?" His mustache quivered. "I did not lose?"

The woman said: "You're attracting too much attention. . . . Sit down! It was a crummy scheme, and I told you it wouldn't work."

That was why she had been watching him, Willy thought, to see if he was falling for it. He said to her confidentially: "It might have worked, at that. If I hadn't got nervous the other night. You all overdid it. You made me so nervous, with your remarks, your heckling, the way you stared, that I couldn't sleep. So I went out for a night run."

Jake said: "I should know even what you're talkin' about, champ?"

Willy shoved him suddenly against the wall behind the table. Then he stepped away and said: "I only wanted to break the bottle of dope in his pocket—the dope he tried to slip me before the fifth. I guess you-all thought I swallowed some water between the fourth and the fifth. I guess you watched me in other fights, and thought I had that habit. But I don't. I never swallow it, even though I want it. So I spit out the dope Jake put in the bottle."

Pat said: "Why, the dirty little—"

Willy said: "Aw, leave him alone. This is where we came in."

The stooges and England were uncertain, their guilt evident in averted eyes, fear which they could not hide. Willy said: "I was outside the Columbia Restaurant when Jake came out of the men's room and stopped to give instructions to you poor boobs. I was so nervous I had run all the way out there. Then I saw that honest Manny Garcia remonstrating with you, so I asked him, and he told me you had had many conferences. You people can never seem to learn that there is always an honest man in every cross-section."

PAT reached out suddenly and grabbed the ends of Jake's mustache. Deliberately, he untwisted them. The little man diminished a cubit, cursing, eyes popping. Pat said: "Aw, the hell with them! Let's go, Willy. We got to pack and catch the next plane."

The woman was still staring, smiling a little. Willy saluted her, grinned at England and his stupefied companions. He followed Pat out.

A few more bouts, a few more purses, he thought. He was not kidding himself. There would be trouble—the drums were still beating. He only wanted a little hunk of security for his wife-to-be.

ASSASSINATION AT

FEAR," Philip thoughtfully observed, "is the keynote of everything here in this room, in this city of Antioch, in this part of the world. Insensate panic—"

"At this season? At Christmas itself?" broke in Lady Glendufa. "But that is wrong. It is wicked!" Her challenging eyes swept the circle of faces. "Nothing will happen. We're wasting our time. Nothing can happen, I tell you!"

Philip shrugged, seeing how the others exchanged glances.

"Anything *can* happen, Glendufa. Fear is contagious. We fear them, and perhaps they fear us. Reason says it's preposterous, but we won't believe reason. We're afraid. We trust neither our rulers nor ourselves. We're afraid, afraid—"

"And why not?" quavered a voice, with excited thrust. "Everything's been overthrown. Around us is pagan, heathen Asia: Soldiers gathering by the thousand. Force that hates us, would love to destroy us. We may well seek some protection—"

A sound crept into the room and hushed the words. The score of people sitting here in conference shivered at it; hands jerked; eyes rolled. Voices screamed thinly like the yapping of wild beasts. Steel clashed; a tumultuous uproar resounded along the city streets and ended in a distant bugle-blast.

"The soldiers are out," growled old farmer Paulus, gnarled hands clenching, shaggy whiskers bristling. "There'll be looting and killing and burning all over the place!"

In a leap of voices others spoke their fears.

Philip glanced at them curiously. Himself a Roman, he had served in the cavalry. Here in Antioch, third greatest city of the Empire and capital of Syria, he found everything strange. Take these Galileans, for example—first named Christians here in Antioch, they still called themselves Galileans—what a queer company they made! The bishop, Meletius, was a good but inefficient fellow. Nearly all the others present belonged to the Gothic colony planted here by Constantine. They had relatives in the Legions, and consequently were the most influential of the community, since the whole army of the eastern provinces was gathering here to march into Parthia in the spring. This Christmas season of the year 362 was one of terror and fear and increasing panic on all sides.

Glendufa was quite calm, he noted; she was always calm, perfectly poised. Her husband was a centurion in the 59th Legion, now in camp just down the river. The Emperor himself was living in the old Roman fortress that dominated the city. No Christmas festival for him or his court! Uncle Constantine had made the empire Christian; his nephew Julian had reversed this, proclaiming tolerance for all religious sects—and thereby loosing the hounds of terror.

Julian was newly come to power; no one was sure of his intent; religious hatreds blazed on all sides. The Christians feared a new persecution; the pagans bitterly feared a Christian revolt—and now blood was running in the streets!

Startled movement swept the room as pounding footsteps sounded on the

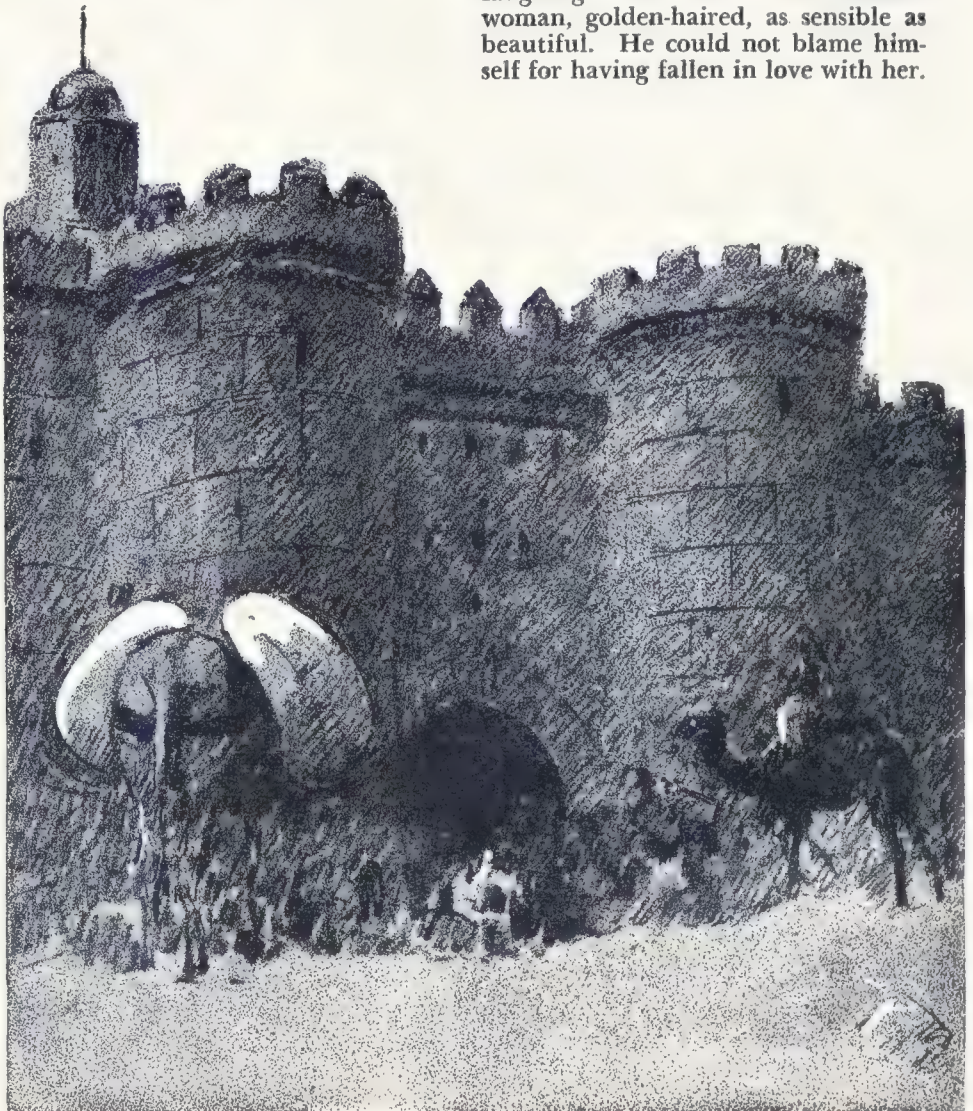
stairs. The door was flung open. In upon the company broke a deacon, stammering, panting and white-faced. Voices blabbed at him. He threw out both hands.

"No, no danger! There's fighting in the streets, yes. Food riots, that's all."

A surge of relief. From Philip came a strong, hearty laugh.

"Well, we're gathered here to devise some system of protection for Galileans," he said. "So we'd best get about it, instead of shaking in our boots at riot noises."

His caustic words bit into them; quiet settled on the room. Paulus, the craggy old farmer who owned the great olive orchards above the city, began to talk and talk. Philip listened with a sneer in his eyes. He dared not look at Glendufa, lest he break out laughing. She was a fine lissome woman, golden-haired, as sensible as beautiful. He could not blame himself for having fallen in love with her.



C CHRISTMAS

STEEL CLASHED AND BUGLES BLARED IN THE ANTIOCH
OF DECEMBER 362 . . . AND THE STRANGE SPHINX
EMERALD FLASHED AGAIN TO POTENT LIFE.

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

Paulus droned on. Antioch, four separate cities forming one, had become the gateway to Far Eastern commerce. Merchants from Parthia, from farther India and all the coasts between, were established here; in some quarters the city was wholly Oriental. More peril there, said the farmer; these people who worshiped strange gods would be quick to slay Christians.

Knowing these Asiatics to be gentle people, Philip listened cynically. He wondered what these good folk would say if they knew the truth about him. Suddenly his eye caught a movement at the door. It opened a little. A face looked in; a hand signaled. He came to his feet abruptly.

"Sorry, friends; I've been sent for; I must leave you," he said. "Let me say just one word: If we Christians want protection, there's only one sensible way of getting it. Send to the Emperor and ask for it! With that advice, I say good night."

He caught a slight smile on Gledufa's lips, and hurried out. On the stairs a man waited—his friend Crates, like himself a member of the Imperial secret service.

"Well, my honest Galilean wolf," jested Crates, "are these sheep of yours plotting to cut all our throats? What weapons have they ready?"

"Droning tongues," Philip rejoined, laughing. "All talk. What brought you here?"

"Urgency. There's been some killing in the riots. I've got a dying man who wants you. A Parthian jeweler-merchant. He's dying, so hurry!"

"Wants me? A Parthian merchant? By Hercules, are you crazy?"

"Well, he wants some court official—news for the Emperor, secret, urgent news! So I came for you; may be

profitable," replied Crates, who was a shrewd fellow with an eye for the main chance. "He knows he's dying, so he'll tell the truth. He's in the street just ahead—I have a couple of soldiers guarding him. He was stabbed during the riot. . . . So you're having no luck with the Galileans?"

"They're not planning revolt at all. All they want is protection. They're scared."

Crates chuckled as he strode along. "And if they knew you were an imperial spy, they'd tear you limb from limb! Frightened people are always dangerous. Still, your job has compensations. You've quarters in the house of the most beautiful woman in Antioch."

"Bosh! Her husband's a centurion," snapped Philip. The other laughed softly. They swung around a corner and came into one of the two great colonnaded avenues of the city.



He set to work delving in the camel camp. By noontime he began to think half the population must be named Tigranes.



Afar lifted the darkly massive bulk of the enormous cathedral Constantine had built here. Close by, a smoky torch was blazing under the colonnades. Two soldiers stood guard. A dark figure lay on the stones, a bearded elderly Parthian. He spoke, as Philip knelt and raised his head.

"Are you—of the court? Are you a Roman?"

"Aye, a Roman." Philip spoke the truth for once. "Aulus Gentius of the imperial household."

The other clasped his arm, came to one elbow, and thrust something into his hand.

"Take this—reward. Swear—swear by the gods to give me burial!"

"I swear by the gods," Philip said gravely. "You shall have fit burial."

"Ah! Tigranes had me murdered—he's behind it—the Emperor will be killed." The gasping voice faltered, then resumed: "Eighth day before the Kalends of January—at the inspection of the troops. Tigranes replaces the driver of the royal elephant—with John of Iconium—to stab—"

The voice failed; the gripping fingers relaxed. Philip looked at the lolling head, put it down, and rose. He turned to the two soldiers and passed them some coins.

"Take care of this man's body. Have it decently buried tomorrow."

"More fool, you," said Crates.

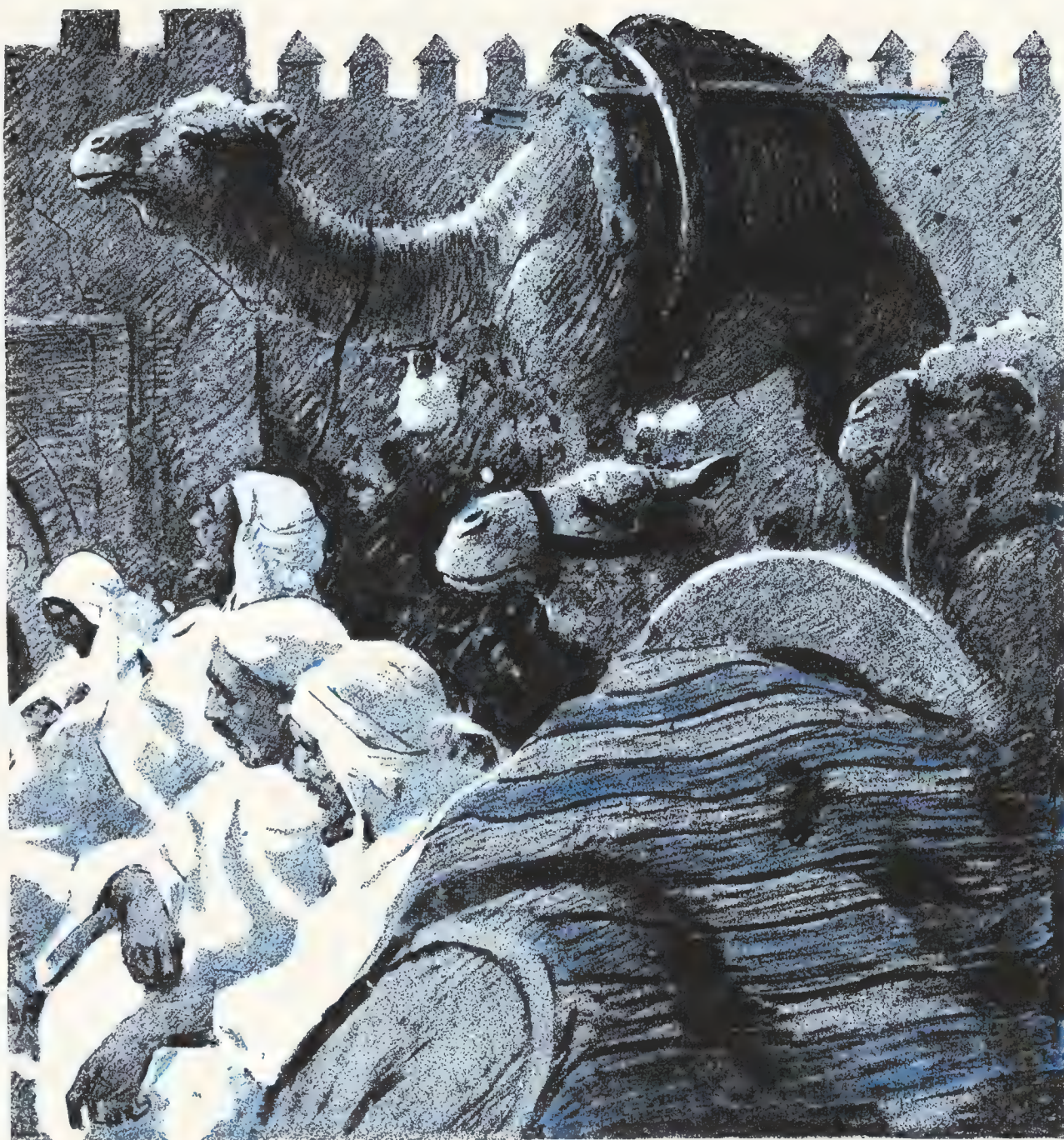
"I promised; therefore it must be done. You hear what he said?"

"Yes. I know a wineshop that's open. Come along."

Philip fell into step, with an ironic smile. The eighth day before the Kalends—why, that would be Christmas itself! And Julian was to be assassinated that day, eh? Blame the Christians, of course; turn loose the legions to loot and massacre. . . .

They found the wineshop, ordered wine. Crates was small, slender, vulpine, a good man. Philip was stocky, dark, with strong features well carven, level dark eyes. Barely thirty, he had won an enviable position as the best of the secret household servants of the Emperor.

"Ha! We've rung the bell," said Crates. "What to do about it? Denounce this Tigranes, whoever he is? That's folly; he'd slip out of it. Might squeeze him for a fat sum."



"Be damned to him—just some Parthian agent," Philip grunted. "This John of Iconium is the actual assassin. Who is he?"

"The name's vaguely familiar, but I can't finger him."

Philip gulped his wine. "Well, there's no rush. Four days before it comes off. Suppose we cast about for information tomorrow, and meet tomorrow night?"

"Agreed." Crates gave him a sharp look. "Suppose we just kept quiet?"

A startling thought, tempting too. Philip half smiled as he pictured it: the streets filled with savagely rejoicing men; the Emperor dead, the bearded Julian upon whom the clean-shaven Antiocheans heaped ridicule; whispers spreading that Christians had killed

him; and then the Legions let loose upon the city in merciless fury. That was how history was made. Then his smile faded.

"Scratch it," he said. "I was a soldier. I keep my oaths."

Crates sighed. "Yes, you have old-fashioned notions about honor and so forth. Well, we have the chance of a lifetime to line our pockets."

"Right. Can't afford to miss it. Sleep on it, then. Where do we meet?"

"Why not here, an hour after dark?"

So agreed, they went their ways; the evening was still young. Philip had said nothing about the hard little cloth-wrapped object given him by the dying Parthian. He went home and sought his room. The house was large, sheltering Glendufa and her

husband, her elder sister and family, and a brace of lodgers.

Lighting his lamp, Philip sat down and produced the mysterious gift. He unfolded the cloth and stared at the green thing revealed. An emerald? That Parthian had been a jewel-merchant. Emerald it must be, yet it was incredible. This stone was enormous, and of cabochon shape. Smears of oil showed it was newly cut and polished, still uncleaned. The color was poor, denoting an Egyptian stone, but—but—

The Roman gripped his fists as he stared, then moved the lamp closer and bent to look more sharply. Inside the stone were flaws that came together, forming a shape. He had been in Egypt and seen the Great Sphinx; some said there was a second like unto

it, up in the desert hills east of the Nile. Here was the image of it made by the flaws—no vague shape but a distinct and clear-cut Sphinx! A jewel unique, a freak of nature!

Then his thoughts strayed, though he found a certain fascination in looking into the stone. Fortune had this night given him and Crates a tremendous chance at gain, provided they did not muffle it. Philip had been raised in a hard army school; he was no angel. The old Roman conception of duty had perished hundreds of years ago; and now, with the breakdown of morality and ethics that had engulfed the Empire, duty was a joke. A thing was right, these days, if it paid. Do whatever you liked, if you could get away with it. Betray anyone, if it was to your interest.

THE secret bequeathed by the dying Parthian could yield untold wealth, with proper manipulation. The Emperor was a good soldier, had won great victories; he was a brawny big man, well intentioned, straightforward, simple in mind; but he had only been a year on the throne. The sons of Constantine had murdered his father and all other relatives. He did not love the Christians, for he clung to the old gods. Were he to die suddenly, anyone in the secret could cash in heavily. Philip had sworn fealty; should he keep his oath, or no?

The light falling across the huge emerald wakened odd fancies in him. Queerly enough, he found himself thinking about his father. Aulus—this was the real family name—had died long ago in the wars of Constantine. A veteran cavalry officer, he had been a hard, grim man, winning nothing except a soldier's fame. Things he had said, things he had done, came flooding into Philip's mind. Why? He could not say; perhaps the emerald had bewitched him. A long while he sat, until sounds from below told him Glendufa was back.

He went down and found her warming before the fire in the main room. It was a chill, rainy night. Her broodered woolen garments sparkled with the wet.

"What's happened?" she exclaimed. "Philip! You look as if you'd been seeing angels!"

"Sit down," he said, unsmiling, and held a chair for her, then put the pottery lamp on the table close by. "Did they reach any decision?"

"Yes. They took your advice. They chose you and Paulus to go to the Emperor."

"Very well," he said carelessly. "Glendufa, you're a lovely woman, and wiser than any I ever knew."

"You had a mother," she said significantly.

"She died when I was a child. Tonight I need your help and advice.

The gods have dropped fortune into my lap."

"The gods?" Her brows lifted. "Strange words for a Galilean to use."

"I'm no Christian; there's the truth for you," he said calmly. "I'm an officer of the imperial service. My present task is to spy on the Christians here and learn if they mean to revolt. Well, I'm tired of lies. You've nothing to fear from me."

She smiled a little. She could read the trouble in his eyes, the strange conflict in his heart. She put out her hand, and he took it.

"I think a great deal of you," he said. "You like me a little."

"With much affection, Philip," she said simply. "That is not your real name, of course, and I knew you were not a Christian."

This caught him up with a jerk. "What? You knew?"

She pressed his hand. "Yes. The 59th was in Macedonia three years ago; my husband saw you then, and recognized you here."

Philip flushed. The quiet words shamed him.

"I'm a fool," he said.

"On the contrary, a very fine man, my dear. What's that in your hands?"

He gave her the emerald and told how he had come by it. She held it to the lamp-glow and caught her breath, and sat looking at it. In the silence, he got himself in hand. Love or no love, he was not a fool. His very love for her told him that her quiet poise and strength held her above any intrigue.

"There's a plot to kill the Emperor," he went on presently. "Christians would like nothing better than to see him dead. I can profit tremendously by it—if I keep silence."

She turned from the emerald to look at him—completely, intently, studying his hard, strong features, and waiting. Her waiting compelled him to go on.

"The Christians could profit. Or the blame might be cast on them. Anything—"

"Anything is possible, even honor," she said quietly.

He started. His eyes lifted to her amazedly.

"Why, that's the very thing my—my father said! They were caught in a trap, some of the 23rd—his Legion. Some said to surrender; some said to fly. Anything, said he, was possible, even honor. They stayed. He died there. Were your words mere accident?"

She nodded. "Yes. I give them to you as my answer, my advice. Now I'm off to bed; there's all the housework for early morning. Pleasant dreams!"

She was gone. Dazedly, Philip pocketed the emerald, covered the fire, picked up the light and went back to his own room. There, he put the

emerald on the table between the two lamps, and sat down, looking at it again, looking into it.

To do him justice, he had been lifted out of any love-making intent, though he did love her. She was not the sort of woman for that. She had twice shocked him; the second time with the very words of his long-dead father. Now, again fascinated by the emerald depths, thoughts of his father recurred. He had always venerated the memory of that man. Why the emerald should bring him to mind, Philip did not know; but so it did. Gradually a change crept into his entire mental makeup. The cynical, grasping, hardened promptings died away; whether the memories of his father wakened them, or whether it were some magic in the glittering green beryl acting upon his mind, a train of glowing fancies came like a procession of splendor-flashes that hinted at such old, half-forgotten things as soldierly honor, manly virtues, unpleasant actions done because duty demanded.

Perhaps, he thought later as he lay abed, Glendufa had started this train of thought. "Anything is possible, even honor"—words applicable to herself also. She too might be fighting off some temptation.

NEXT morning he slipped out of the house early. He had to see the Emperor sometime this day to make report; he had to see Paulus and arrange with him the visit to ask for protection; more important, he had to look up John of Iconium and Tigranes—find out who they were. Tigranes was a common Parthian name and must belong to some merchant.

He set to work searching bazaars, talking with lesser spies of the Intelligence Bureau, delving into the camel camp outside the city walls, drinking at the caravanserais which catered to Oriental custom. By noon-time, he began to think half the population of Parthia must be named Tigranes, and he found no one who knew anything of a John of Iconium. Antioch the Golden, as it was named, gave his searchings no reward. And, since it contained nearly a quarter-million souls, this was small wonder.

With afternoon, he took his way to the castle and was at once admitted to the presence of the Emperor. Julian dismissed his scribes, who were taking down his dictation on a book against the Christian sect, and welcomed the visitor warmly.

"Well, Aulus, have you any information on these Galileans?"

"Plenty," rejoined Philip. "It all boils down to one word. They're honest."

Julian laughed. "Good! In Alexandria they're pestilent philosophers, in Constantinople braggarts and fight-

ers—and here in Antioch, honest. And no plots at work?”

“Only one. They’re frightened of persecution and have decided to send two deputies to beg your protection. I’m one of the two. When will it please you to receive us?”

Julian broke into hearty laughter. “A beautifully ironic game, eh? You, an imperial spy, one of the delegates! By all means—let’s see, now. Make it the feast they celebrate—Christmas. Come to me here in the morning before I leave to inspect the troops. That’s the eighth day before the Kalends of January. I’ll have a decree of protection all written out and sealed for you.”

Philip, smiling, thanked him and turned in a detailed report previously written out. The Emperor discussed with him the idea of quartering certain legions in the city.

“Food riots like that of last night are disturbing,” he said. “And there’s a sense of fear, almost of panic, spreading. Where fear grows, we seldom find reason. It impels fantastic things; the greater the fear, the more fantastic are its effects.

“Quite true,” said Philip. “A good many of the city folk have relatives in the 59th—move it into the city and they’d feel safer. That is, in the Gothic quarter.”

Julian nodded approval and made a note. This fantasy of panic, as he termed it, disturbed him. Nineteen different rumors of plots against his life had come in; he laughed at them, but not at their cause. Hence, for the coming inspection, he had ordered out the full equipment of forty war-elephants and would use one of them himself, to make an impressive show. The narrow citadel gate was now being widened to admit this imperial chariot on four legs.

Philip departed thoughtfully. Here was corroboration of the story told by the dying Parthian. John of Iconium would be the driver of that elephant, no doubt.

That evening came a more abrupt crisis than he had anticipated. He reached the wineshop early, got a corner table, and sipped his wine reflectively. The sort of work he was doing disgusted him. Only today Julian had called him an imperial spy; quite true, and it put him to shame. It was not easy to leave the imperial household service, however. He had taken it as a stopgap and found himself bridled.

Nice if he could get out of it now—and could pick up some money. There was an opening in Alexandria with a construction firm, Romans like himself. Just then he glanced up and saw Crates coming in the door. Behind him followed two armed men, Parthians by their looks, who went to the bar. Crates had nothing to do with

Illustrated by Maurice Bower



“You’re a strange man,” Glendusa breathed softly. “I’ll carry out the errand, be sure of that.”

them, of course—but Philip sensed a sudden tautness. His nerves jumped; he became alert, wary. He knew that Crates was capable of anything. Here, indeed, anything was possible—except honor.

They shook hands. Crates ordered wine, sighed and relaxed.

“Well, any luck?”

“Not a stroke,” confessed Philip.

Crates laughed.

“Ha! I’ve a different tale to tell—vastly different. I was approached. Our talk with the fellow last night was noted. I’ve had an offer. Oh, they felt me out carefully, delicately! It was beautiful work, and I played up to it.”

“He’s not sure of me,” thought Philip, and veiled his eyes, looking down at his cup. Something smelly here; those two fellows were with him, all right. “I’ll be in a pinch if I don’t watch my step!” he reflected.

“I don’t get it,” he answered. “What sort of offer?”

“Money. Heaps of it. Parthia has gold to burn, you know, and is afraid of Julian. Well, the point is that I stalled, said I’d have to play ball with you, and so forth. If you say the

word, we can get taken here and now to Tigranes. I don’t know who he is, but suspect he’s merely a Parthian agent. The offer is ten thousand gold-pieces to each of us, for silence. Paid tonight on the nail, if we accept.”

“Oh.” A fat sum, thought Philip. “And if we refuse?”

“I don’t know. Didn’t ask, in fact. Tonight is the deadline. I suspect some of the court officials are in the game, because the fellow who talked with me knew all about you and me both, and the offer includes a good position at court later on.”

Philip sipped his wine. A pinch, sure enough. Crates had accepted the bribe; those Parthians had come along to silence Philip with their weapons if he refused.

“You tempt me,” he said slowly. “It’s a big sum. And, you say, in cash?”

“I saw the gold coins.”

Damning words; he must have seen Tigranes as well, then. A short laugh escaped Philip, and he emptied his cup.

“If you think my old-fashioned honor, Roman virtue and so forth, are proof against that sum, think again!

Get your guide. Let's go. I want to see the money myself."

Crates started up. "You're for it?" "Definitely."

Crates spoke to one of the Parthians, who accompanied them outside and then set forth at a brisk stride. They followed him through the dark streets and came into the bazaar quarter of little shops and Asiatic faces, and ended at a dark entry to a rug shop. The guide knocked and spoke, the door was opened, he slipped inside. Crates followed, then Philip. A lamp glimmered on a dark passage; then a curtain was pulled aside and they stepped into a lighted room heaped with piles of rugs, where a man sat at a desk.

He was a dark, clean-shaven, alert man with jet eyes, and a strong, sure smile.

"Greetings," he said, calling them by name as though an old friend. His gaze settled on Philip. "So you found no trace of me today, eh? You sought earnestly enough."

"You seem oddly aware of my doings," Philip replied.

"You Roman spies are like children," said Tigranes. Philip bit his lip. "We need not waste words. Your friend has told you the terms. Are they agreeable?"

"Yes, with a slight change. Give me five hundred pieces of gold, to pay my debts, and the balance in an order on Lazar Brothers, the banking-house with branches everywhere." Philip spoke calmly. "And you have no assurance that I will not take your money and then betray you."

Tigranes smiled at him. "No? My friend, you are welcome to try, if you like. We have friends everywhere in the imperial household. We would know it immediately; you would die very quickly—and that is all. You would not like to lose a promising future?"

PHILIP chuckled. He rather liked this fellow who called him a spy. An efficient man.

"Assuredly not," he said. "Together with another deputy from the Christians here, I'm to visit the Emperor just before he leaves for the inspection."

"Yes. You made the appointment today, I understand," Tigranes said carelessly, and Philip felt cold sweat on his palms. Probably a secretary of Julian was in the plot. "When the thing is done, the blame will be thrown on the Christians, so you had better sever your connections with them quickly. It is agreed, then?"

"Agreed." Philip nodded coolly. "I admire your efficiency."

Tigranes smiled. "The tribute is appreciated." He touched a small bell. A slave entered, received instructions, and went out. "The money will

be brought. The sum promised you, Crates, will be delivered in the morning at your quarters. Satisfactory?"

"Entirely," said Crates, beaming. "About the positions to be given us later—"

"That will be arranged by the officials in concert with us," said Tigranes. "They will approach you in the matter, so fear not. Ah, here is the money."

The slave reëntered, and placed on the desk a leather bag. Tigranes waved to it and smiled at Philip.

"Yours, my friend. You will find the sum exact. Anything else?"

"Nothing, except my thanks." Philip took the heavy little bag. "May the gods favor us all! In case I need to reach you—"

"This is the shop of Permanes the rug-merchant."

A WORD of farewell, and the two friends departed. Out in the street again, Crates laughed in relief. "Good, good! I'm glad you became sensible."

"Perhaps it's my throat," said Philip. "I've had a bit of fever—the damp nights here have hit my throat. At any rate, the money will help cure me! Well, good night, and take care of yourself!"

They separated and Philip went straight home. Glendufa met him—farmer Paulus had been here to see him and was highly nervous about the visit to the Emperor.

Philip laughed.

"Dear lady, that comes the third day from now—and a lot more comes then, too. Send him word to come here tomorrow; I'll be here all day. In fact, I'll be very ill. Make no secret of my illness. Send for a couple of physicians. Arrange to give me an hour in the morning, and to visit your husband in the camp downriver tomorrow afternoon."

She eyed him sharply. "Have you been drinking?"

"Yes. Drinking treachery and betrayal, of which this bag of gold is proof." He slapped the leather bag blithely. "Now I'm going to drink common sense and good counsel for an hour, before turning in."

"I want to talk to you," she said.

"Not tonight. I have sore need of advice from my father, God rest him!"

He left her staring after him and went to his own room. The very sight of her, the sound of her voice, tempted him. He was afraid of himself.

When his lamp was lighted, he sat down at the table, got out the emerald, and settled down to look into it and study it. He had made vague, tentative plans; he forgot them, a sense of composure gradually settled on his mind. Those green reaches within the beryl wrought their enthralling spell and shut away everything else.

Across his thoughts drifted his last sight of his father, sword-girt, cuirass-clad; it seemed the older man gave him a smile, a penetrating look, a nod. Sheer hallucination, of course. He had sense enough to know as much; still, one always likes to pretend.

Queer how his father had lived and died, a plain, ordinary army man, getting nothing out of it. Uncompromising, too; either a thing was right or it was wrong. Few men could live that simple philosophy! It was hard to live, at times.

"Like me with Glendufa," reflected Philip. "I love her. I want her with all of me; want to live this life with her, give her everything that centurion can't give her. I don't give a damn if it's wrong—but she does. Therefore I must too. And therefore all I can do is to clear out—unless I take the easy, selfish course. But I'll have to clear out. Tigranes called me a spy; he was right. I've come down far. I'll have to climb back up again."

He thought his father was laughing grimly. He looked a while longer, then put out the light, stretched himself on the bed, and fell asleep.

SUNLIGHT woke him. He rose, dressed, opened the bag of gold and shoved a handful of coins into his pocket—heavy, broad pieces. He went down to the kitchen and breakfasted. In an hour, said Glendufa, she would be ready to talk. He nodded and returned to his room and there, very carefully, covered a scrap of vellum with writing. He had just finished when a servant came to tell him that Paulus was here asking for him.

"Bring him up here."

Paulus climbed up and came in. Philip shook hands, gave him a chair, and started in.

"Look, my brother. I have been given an appointment with the Emperor. We're to see him Christmas morning, just before he leaves the castle to inspect the troops. That means we meet here at eleven. That suit you?"

"Of course," said the craggy farmer. "Whatever you say will suit me."

"Then come with a horse for each of us. We must ride, as befitting the dignity of delegates. Here, take this." Into the horny palm Philip put a dozen gold pieces. "That farm of yours is just outside town in the upper valley, I think?"

"Aye, where there's no lack of water for the olives."

"Good. I want you to get two good fast horses for me and have them at the farm. Also water-skins and an outfit of simple white robes such as the desert men wear. I may have to leave here in haste and must neglect nothing. There are rumors of plots and killings. You'll be safe, but I may be in danger."

Paulus scratched his whiskers nervously. The idea of seeing the Emperor face to face was exciting; the supposed peril of the interview disturbed him terribly. He was jumping with alarm and anxiety.

"Oh, aye, about the horses—well and good. Nothing easier," said he. "And shall I wear my best clothes to the interview?"

"The best you have," said Philip. "Horses for it, remember. And two horses for me out at your farm. We'll go there from the castle. Is that enough money?"

"Enough and double," said Paulus, and departed.

Now Philip sought Glendufa, found her awaiting him, and closed the door. He gave her two of the gold pieces.

"For the physicians when they come. Keep them a little and dismiss them. I merely want to make sure that the people watching me think I'm ill."

"Very well. I can see my husband this afternoon. Now what's it all about?"

"The assassination of the Emperor, for which the Galileans are to be blamed," said Philip, watching her. "I'm very much tempted to let it go through and seize the opportunity to carry you off. Unfortunately, my father would disagree, and I doubt whether you would welcome a new life under such auspices, so I've decided on something else."

She went from white to red as she met his eyes. "You're serious?"

"Deadly serious, my dear," he rejoined. "I'm helpless to avert the killing. My companion Crates is in the plot. So are others of the imperial household, who are conniving with certain Parthians. No one can save Julian except the army officers. They must take action at the last minute—short, sharp, decisive action. Give your husband this information; here are the salient points written down for him."

He gave her the vellum, then launched into a description of the plot as he knew it and told where Tigranes was located.

"He must be seized. There must be no errors, no time wasted," he went on. "I myself will take the assassin in hand, because this will be a sop to my pride—a bit of action that will restore my self-respect, as it were." He smiled whimsically as he spoke. "All the rest, I leave to your husband. Other officers will be glad to join him. Julian is the idol of the army. And, I may say, he has promised that when Paulus and I see him he'll give us an edict of protection for the Christians here. Paulus doesn't know it yet."

"He—the Emperor—has promised you?" she said. "You know him?"

"Of course. Now, you understand—the action must be taken at the last

minute, at noon, Christmas. It must be sweeping and complete, so far as possible. Not a soul can be trusted. Let your husband take full credit—I want none."

A servant knocked. There was a man here asking for Philip, he said. Glendufa went to see him and came back with a strip of vellum, saying that when she said Philip was ill, the man left this for him. It was the promised order on Lazar Brothers or their agents for the balance of the gold. Philip read it, laughed, and tucked it away.

As he stood up, Glendufa came to him, looking at him.

"I don't know what to say," she breathed softly. "You're a strange man, a remarkable man, and I like you. I'll carry out the errand, be sure of that."

She leaned forward and kissed him frankly and unskimpingly, perhaps secure in the feeling that he would understand.

Philip went to his own room and stayed there all afternoon. He had excellent company, for the sun appeared, pouring in at his window, and struck the Sphinx emerald into a glory of green depths and exquisite refractions. A long while he sat poring over the bit of beryl. As before, it left his mind composed, quiet, gratefully reassured.

Perhaps this was because he had chosen his course and there was no backing out. He knew this jewel was an exceptional, unique thing; but he had no belief in magic. Therefore he reasoned that its singular effect upon his mind must be a purely normal matter—as one sees figures in the leaping flames. Imagination, in other words. If so, very well. He was certain that the thing fascinated him beyond words. He meant to head for Alexandria, and Egypt was the land of the Sphinx.

"So, then, you go with me," he said, smiling a little. "And it may be that a new life awaits us both there, my precious emerald!"

A coruscation in the green depths winked back at him, and he laughed delightedly.

THAT evening he saw Glendufa briefly. All was well, she said; her husband had the matter in hand. There was no chance for private talk. The bishop, Meletius, had come to give Philip long-winded advice about approaching the Emperor and the arguments to use in seeking protection, and so forth. Philip listened blandly and said yes to everything. A saintly man, this bishop, but scarcely interesting.

The time passed draggingly, chiefly in avoidance of his hostess; to Philip, the memory of that kiss was burning temptation. When he wakened on

Christmas morning, it was with a sigh of relief at the end of suspense. The day was dark, cloudy, chill with threatening rain. He made no pretence, took no part in the celebration of the Christians, but kept to his room.

AS morning advanced, he made his simple preparations. The emerald he safely pouched, together with a goodly store of gold and his precious draft on Lazar Brothers. A light cuirass of metal links, sword at waist, and a voluminous military cloak that covered these; he was ready. He watched the time carefully, went downstairs, and when Paulus came up the street on horseback, with a led horse, he stepped forth and greeted the grizzled farmer, who was in festive garb.

"Let's be gone," he said, swinging into the saddle. "To the castle!"

Paulus was excited, nervous, on edge. At the castle gates, Philip noted more guards than usual. A group of the 59th stood about, talking and laughing. Excellent; this showed that things were moving. The two were passed into the courtyard. Philip spoke softly, as they dismounted.

"I've had a tip to look out for trouble. If anything goes wrong, jump for the horses and ride out of the city. Make for your farm."

This did not reassure the farmer in the least.

At one side was the towering bulk of a huge war-elephant, his trappings bearing the imperial emblems. Soldiers and grooms and court officials were crowded around him. While elephants were no novelty, this was a magnificent beast chosen to carry Julian himself. Philip glanced at the throng. Somewhere there must be John of Iconium!

A chamberlain led him and Paulus into the antechamber of the imperial suite. Here were officers of the staff chatting in groups. There was a wait; Philip wondered how many of these fine-feathered officers were in the plot. At last came a chamberlain, and the two delegates were led into the private rooms of the Emperor.

Julian, who was dressing, greeted them affably. Paulus fumbled out some words about the Galileans and their faithful service and their apprehensions of danger. Julian took his hand and pressed it.

"Yes, yes. You're an honest man; I can see that for myself," he said. "Of course I don't know the half of what goes on in this city of yours. I've been thinking about you Galileans, however. I want to assure you of my protection. I've even drawn up an edict to that effect. Isn't this one of your religious festivals?"

"It is the day we celebrate as the birthday of Christ," said Paulus.

"Ah, yes—the birthday of your god, eh? Well, you're free to worship him

or anyone else." Julian beckoned a hovering secretary and took from him a folded vellum. He handed this to Philip. "Here you are, duly drawn up and sealed."

An expression of thanks, and the two delegates departed, Paulus smiling and jubilant. As they came into the courtyard, Philip took Paulus' arm.

"Go to the horses; be ready. I heard someone say we were to be stabbed before we got away. They mean to murder us. Let me see what I can do to prevent it."

He turned abruptly toward the group surrounding the elephant. Paulus, shocked and horrified, gawked after him, then started for the two horses.

Philip came briskly to the group and picked his man at once—a stranger to him, armed and holding a long elephant goad. Coming close to him, Philip tapped his shoulder.

"Are you John of Iconium?" he asked.

The other turned quickly.

"Aye—driver of the imperial elephant. What is it to you?" he replied, dark eyes stabbing suspiciously.

"You're under arrest—" Philip began, but got no farther.

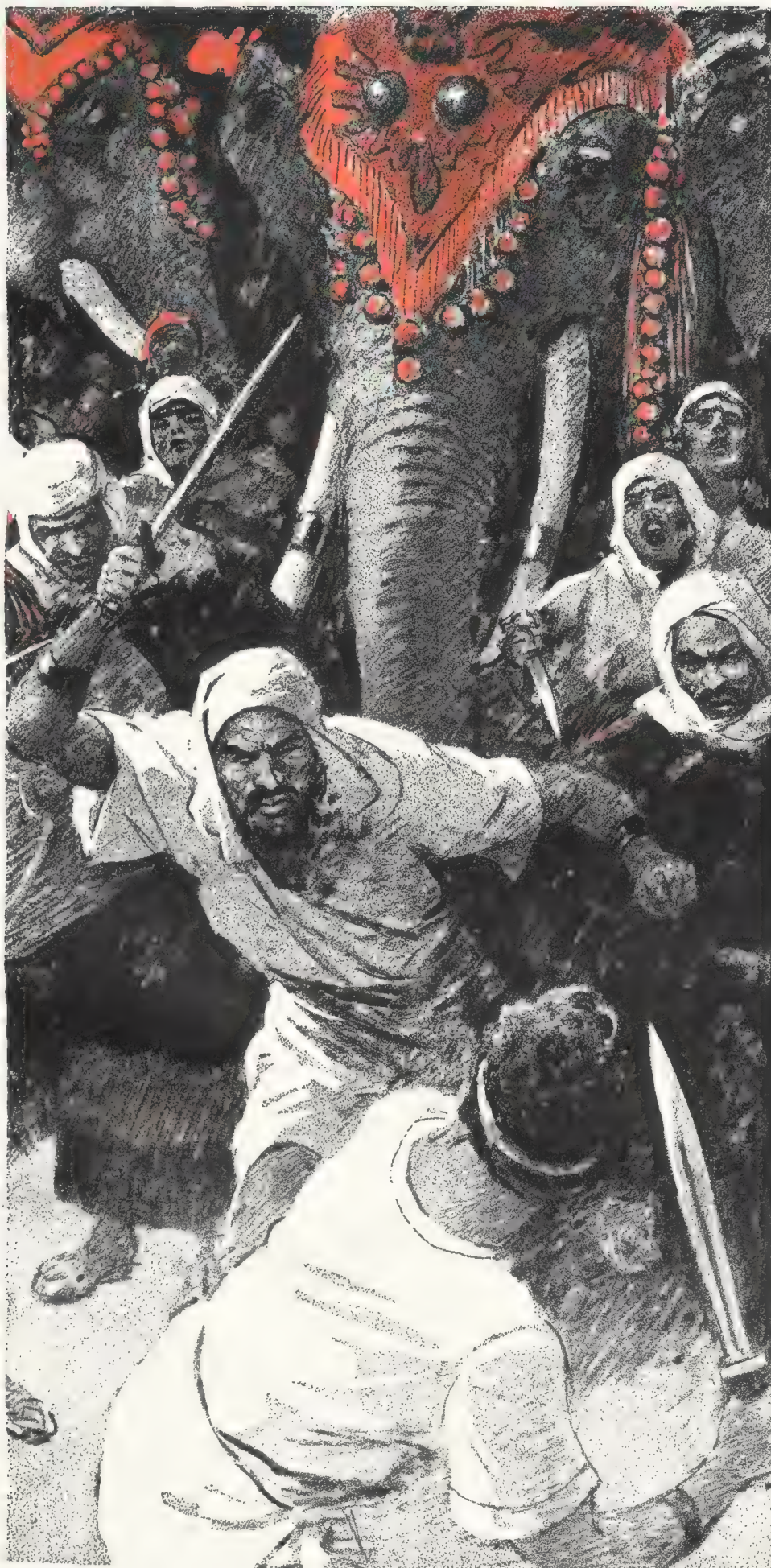
The long goad dropped. Swift as light, the man's hand slid out sword and struck. Only the cuirass hidden under his cloak saved Philip from the shrewd, deadly blow, whose impact knocked him back a pace. The man was upon him with animal ferocity; but then his own sword was out and guarding. Yells went up from those around; they were quickly stilled.

That first instant told Philip that his antagonist was a deadly swordsman, but he was legion-trained, and every legion had its own tricks. He wasted no time in skill, but shifted into the trick he had learned in Gaul with the 12th Legion. A pretended slip to one knee, then up and inside the other's blade, his own point stabbing for the armpit. It took speed and skill—but it worked. The blade drove home. John of Iconium went staggering, a gush of blood pouring from him.

In the same instant, Philip swung around. Others were closing in, steel flashing—he broke into a run and was away. Farmer Paulus was in his own saddle, staring, frightened. Philip gained the other animal and swung up. They went clattering for the gate. Men were running and shouting. The two horses broke through them.

Done! It was done, they were out in the street, clearing the way with furious voice. Paulus swept into the lead and made for the street leading to the east gate. Any pursuit dropped away long ere they reached it. There was no question as they slowed down and rode out, passing the wagons and country folk and seeking the clear road.





That first instant told Philip his antagonist was a deadly swordsman; he wasted no time in skill, but shifted into the trick he had learned in Gaul.

"Speed!" called Philip, and the other obeyed.

No pursuit. A mile, two miles, and no dust rose behind them. Paulus slewed out of the road into a track. The gray-green of olive groves lifted ahead, and a house and stables. Paulus was there first, and dismounted, his eyes goggling at Philip.

"You're hurt!" he cried, as the Roman dismounted, his cloak lifting away from him.

"Only a scratch," said Philip, with a laugh. "With that trick, the other fellow's blade usually catches your arm—you can tie it up. Here's the edict Julian gave us. You take care of it. Now for my clothes—"

"Come into the house. I'll show you, then get your horses."

No time was wasted. Paulus asked no questions. He bound up the bleeding arm, showed the heap of garments, and went out to saddle and bring forth the horses. Philip stripped, made sure of his precious pouch, and donned the new garments. When he came outside, Paulus was just leading out the horses, one for riding, the other for load of water-skins and food. Philip took his hand.

"Good man. Thanks. Now fear not—the crisis is past, you're in no further harm. Give my love to Glendufa when you see her. Farewell!"

Queries enough now—Philip ignored them, picked up the reins and rode off. He knew already how to gain the great army highway that ran south through Syria to Paulusium and Alexandria. He was off—he was gone, with no one the wiser, none knowing where to seek him.

Yet—Glendufa had kissed him, and this was no memory to be lightly cast aside.

IT was Christmas Day these things happened. In the following June, greater things came to pass. For Julian, battling in the Parthian deserts, was struck by a shaft and killed, and most of his army destroyed. As one result of this, a new and Christian ruler was elected, to occupy Constantinople and make it capital of the Eastern Empire for a thousand years and more.

As a further result, a man in Alexandria named Aulus Gentius hastily packed and got aboard a galley leaving for Antioch. So much the record says, and ends. What became of him, whether he returned, no one knows; but I like to think that he went for a purpose and came not back to Egypt alone.

That kind of man would not.

Nothing Fancy

Professional football is played for keeps—and a blocking back like Johnny Carr may have to take a lot off the field as well as on it.

by WILLIAM E. COX

JOHNNY CARR came off the practice field sweating and happy. The large men of the Behemoths Professional Football Club had proved better than he expected. It was enough.

A small girl with slanting, arched brows and hazel eyes stopped him on the ramp, notebook in hand, and said: "I'm Nan Orcutt, the club secretary, and I must get your obit."

Johnny blinked. "I am going to die? The Jaybirds sold me to slaughter?"

She was a very pretty girl, and gay. She said: "This is for publicity release, you dope. For the morning papers. I have all the regular stuff—age thirty, born in Florida, veteran blocking back, traded for Boden and considerable cash. . . . But there doesn't seem to be a colorful fact to hang a story on."

"You are not just kidding, pal," he told her. "There is nothing fancy about me. No sports-writer ever has hymned Carr's talents in words of leaping fire. Although once a cub on the Philadelphia *Record* noticed that I made a downfield block and wrote almost a whole sentence about it. I think he got fired."

"You have no Southern accent," she observed. "You've spent time with the Indians, the Mastodons, the Goats, the Panthers, and you come to us fresh from our closest rivals, the Jaybirds. There *must* be a story in you."

"I've been livin' No'th foah yeahs, sisteh," he mimed. "I talk uptown like anyone else nowadays. I'm just a blockin' back, and people don't notice blockin' backs—they are too busy eyeballin' Dick Slade or Bick Bickel runnin' that ball."

He was aware that the girl's eyes widened, then narrowed, and that something was amiss. He turned and saw Slade and Bickel close by, just entering the clubhouse door. They were scowling at him, Slade blond, arrogant, lean in the hips; Bickel wider, sturdier, piano-legged. Johnny said mildly, "Hiya, boys? I was just tell-

ing the little lady that the ball-carriers get the headlines—and the dough."

"I always heard you talked a lot with your mouth," said Slade. "Don't make any mistakes on this club."

"Yeah," said Bickel. "Don't make any errors on this club."

"I'll see you later, Nan," said Slade. "Got a short conference with Peaches. Say—half an hour?"

The girl seemed meek. "Yes, Dicky." The two backs went into the clubhouse. Johnny scratched his head. He said: "There you go—I've done wrong again. Seven times per week—no, eight, because twice on Sunday, I have to bawl out smart running backs. They hate me. I get traded. I move on."

"But you always get another good job," she said.

"It's prejudice," Johnny told her. "The coaches all ask for me. Somehow or other they lean toward a blocker to get their fancy boys past the scrimmage line."

"I see," she said thoughtfully. "And I remember other cases—like our Andy Boden. The boys didn't like him, so he got traded—for you."

"And cash," Willy pointed out, not without pride. "After all, I have my uses, and Peaches knows it. If you weren't all tied up with Dicky-boy, I'd try to date you, Nan darling."

She said: "You're the freshest blocking back I ever met, anyway." But she smiled at him as she tripped away with her notebook. He waved a kiss at her and went inside.

There was a fine odor of liniment and leather and soapy water and the showers hissed merrily. Peaches Maloney, Coach of the Behemoths—a wide man getting fat but a whale of a lineman not too long ago—grabbed his arm as he doffed his jersey and pads and hauled him into a small office apart from the others. Johnny sat on a straight chair and wiped his barrel chest with a towel. He said: "You got a pretty fair outfit, Peaches."

The coach grunted. "You come from the Jaybirds. What about it?"

Johnny squinted. He said: "The Birds got Cham Cohen and Dolly Grey. They work over the good men on your club. Not dirty—just hard. You've got Slade and Bickel and nobody else to climax for you."

Peaches tapped his desk-top with blunt fingers. He said: "Slade and Bickel are the two best runnin' backs in the league."

"I get paid for sticking my head in other men's bread-baskets," said Johnny blithely. "I'm putting up a couple cottages on a key off the West Coast of Florida. I got land from the Gulf through to Sarasota Bay. Bathin' on the Gulf side, fishin' on the bay. What I care about temperamental runnin' backs?"

Peaches said: "You going to have a boat? Take out parties?"

"Uh-huh," said Johnny. "In the winter I'll maybe coach a high-school team. Get the cottages rented, build some more later on, maybe."

Peaches said: "How much money you need?" He was a sandy-haired man with green eyes which gleamed at Johnny now. "Son, I'm crazy about Florida."

Johnny said firmly: "This is a one-man deal. What I can save this year will almost do it. Next year—I'll last long enough."

PEACHES said: "Look, Johnny. I'll make you a deal that'll help. One thousand dollars, under the table. A bonus."

"Who do I kill?" asked Johnny, spitting on his hands. "A whole grand? Wow!"

"That's just it," said Peaches earnestly. "You don't. You lay off. You get along with Bickel and Slade. They've got the team on edge. You take it from them. If we beat the Jaybirds and get in the play-offs, you get a grand."

Johnny said slowly: "And if we get into the play-offs, I get another cut. . . . Brother, this is heaven come to earth." He shook hands elaborately with Peaches. He said: "I will lie down

and let them wipe their boots on me. I will kiss them."

The door to the office banged open. Dick Slade, dressed to the eyes in a couple of hundred dollars' worth of suiting and a twelve-buck shirt, glared at them. He cried: "You got a hell of a nerve, you havel! You had a date with mel!"

Bickel, crowding behind his alternate running back, said: "Me, too, Peaches."

Johnny got to his feet; he bowed from the waist, backing around the chair toward the open door. He said: "Gentlemen, be seated. . . . And we are sorry. Peaches is sorry; I am sorry; and our whole families are sorry. Good evening, gentlemen."

He did not even wink at Peaches behind their backs for fear they would catch him. He closed the door softly and went to the showers. He dressed, whistling under his breath. He shrugged into a loose overcoat and strode out the gate of the ball-park, head high. A cab lingered at the curb, and he decided to splurge. He

had his foot in the door when on the opposite side the door popped open and a small feminine figure firmly ensconced itself in the tonneau.

"Well, my old friend Nan!" said Johnny. "I salute thee. Wouldst ride around the park, perchance? Wouldst woo a little?"

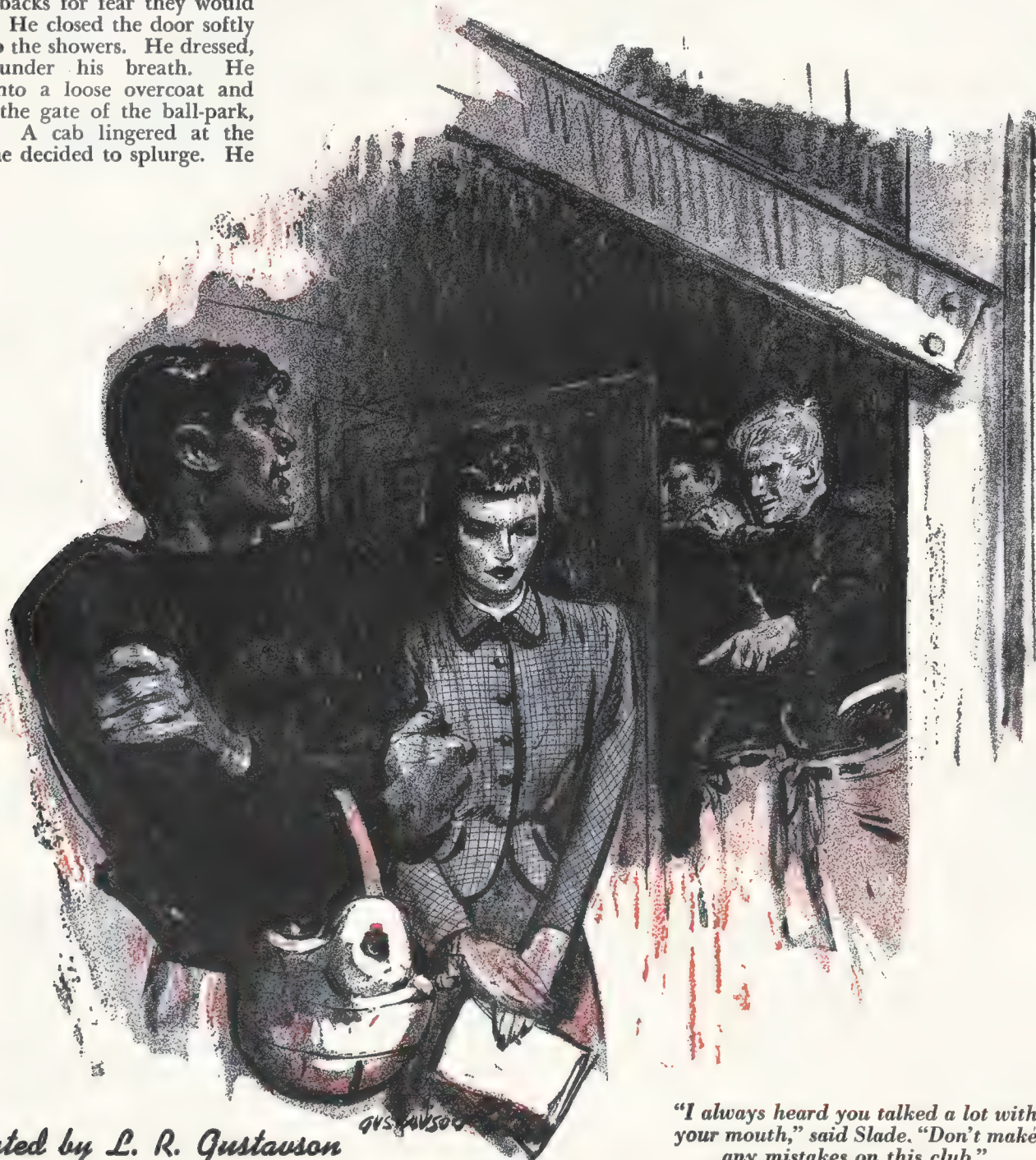
She said: "I'll go to dinner with you if you like. That Dick Sladel! You heard him tell me in a half-hour. Look at the time! That swell-headed big—"

"Oh-oh!" said Johnny. He took his foot from the door. He bowed again. He said: "I am very sorry, lady. I meant no harm. Please do not have me arrested for ogling and leering. I will see you another time, maybe—if you allow me—which I doubt."

He closed the cab door firmly. He saw Slade running up the ramp. He slid into the gathering shadows and walked rapidly down toward the street-car line. He should not have aspired to a cab, anyway, he told himself severely; it was a waste of money needed for his Florida project. And he could not afford to take small girls to dinner, either.

He opened and closed his hand. It made a big fist. He took the fist and hit himself atop his head, quite hard. It hurt. Satisfied, he did it again. Then he got on a street-car and rode out to the boarding-house operated by Mrs. Sylvia Franks.

He ate only twice as much as the other boarders, and Mrs. Franks was privately very alarmed. Her son,



Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

"I always heard you talked a lot with your mouth," said Slade. "Don't make any mistakes on this club."



"Your plans are good, Johnny," said Sylvia. "There is only one flaw in them."

aged nine, name of Louis, was even more perturbed, being the most ardent of Behemoth fans. They conferred together, and at ten they brought *kuchen* and a quart of milk to Johnny's room, where he was listening to Bob Hope. It was *Apfelkuchen*, Johnny's favorite, and he ate. With the passage of time he had regained his self-respect, and the attentions of the lady and her son were warm and flattering.

Mrs. Franks had lost her husband in the late war and was bravely making her own way with a somewhat unique boarding-house for ex-GIs, in which excellent food and clean, comfortable rooms helped solve an acute housing problem existing in the metropolis. A hard worker, a kindly woman who easily drew other young widows to her for help at fair pay, she was doing very well. Even now, she had confided proudly to Johnny, she was making ready to open a second establishment, to be administered by her more experienced aides. Mrs. Franks had only one trouble in her business. She was so beautiful and shapely that her boarders, all men by choice, were continually attempting to marry her.

She was a dark lady, with almond eyes and full red lips which curved upward as naturally as the sunflower turns toward the solar disk. She watched Johnny consume the *kuchen* and milk and said: "Sunday we shall come and see you play. My husband played football, in the high school. He was a medium back."

"Halfback!" Louis said scornfully. "He was a star halfback. I betcha Johnny scores ten touchdowns against the Jaybirds. I betcha he scores a hundred points."

Johnny said: "I'm a blocking back, Looney. I do not carry the ball."

"Two hundred points!" said Louis firmly. He was a lad not easily deprived of his dreams.

SYLVIA FRANKS said: "Is the pay very good, Johnny, at this professional football? You are doing well, my friend?"

"Now that I'm livin' here, off the fat of the land, I am doing very well," Johnny told her, flashing his number one grin. Then her real and decent interest got through to him. He patted Louis on the arm and gave him

an old scrapbook, which contained many pictures of Johnny blocking, but almost never contained his name. He said: "Sylvia, I will tell you about Florida. You have got more sense than I, and maybe you can give me advice." Her eyes kindled, and he unfolded his little plan.

When he had finished, she sighed deeply once. Then she stood up and said briskly: "Come, Louis. This man knows what he wants. In this world there are not many such. Listen to him—he is not a fool. Good night, Johnny. Your plans are good. There is only one flaw in them, but that is a thing for you to find out for your own self. Good night now." She led the reluctant Louis to the door.

The boy yanked away, turned and surveyed Johnny sadly. "You're big enough, and you look tough enough. Why don't you ever score no touchdown?"

"Because I am such a dope," said Johnny humbly. "Good night, you wonderful people, and sleep tight."

He slept well himself, his stomach comfortably full of Mrs. Franks' fine food. . . .

The Behemoths played the Indians, away, on a Sunday, and Johnny got his first action under fire with his new teammates: It was a matter of getting the nuances of Behemoth play, of timing his blocks and knowing how his fellows acted under fire. He found them a very serious bunch of athletes, their eyes trained on a possible championship. The spirit of hope was with them, and he recognized it.

In the third quarter Slade was in there, and they needed a touchdown to clinch the game. The large, sturdy gentlemen of the forward wall such as Beckstrom, Levy, Bostain, Moravich and Mordecai performed some down-field blocking feats, and the ball rested on the Indian twenty.

THERE had been a bit of beefing by Bickel and by Slade; there always was. The two stars, working alternately, were supposed to spark the attack of the club, and took it upon themselves to do so verbally. Pete Lane, the hard-bitten quarterback, growled his signals, staring at Johnny across the circle of the huddle. Johnny shut one eye. The team shifted into the single wing right, and Mordecai snapped the ball to Slade.

Men went this way, went that way, faking. Slade checked. Johnny swung and led outside. A giant Indian end threw off opposition and slammed through where he had no right to be. Instead of leading the blockers, Johnny had to meet this interference with the plan. He laid into the big Indian with all his might and main, and the shock jarred him to his heels. He rolled on the grass, but the end stayed down with him. Slade got three yards.

Johnny's head whirled, but he came back to the huddle still grinning. Slade snapped: "Can't you keep your feet, you clown? I'd've had a first down if you could've taken the wing back, dummy!"

There was a profane answer to that, having to do with a dog and a rabbit. Johnny opened his mouth, and Pete Lane looked hopeful. Bob Carter, the Behemoth fullback, also looked ready to join in. But Johnny shook his hard head and just stared at Pete. The quarterback doggedly gave another signal. Slade started through the line.

Johnny knocked off two men, this time. But a rolling, helpless Indian guard grimly stuck out a hand and grabbed a heel. It was Slade's heel, and the star runner went down face forward. There was a terrific crash, and they had to carry him off on the stretcher.

Lane gave a pass signal, threw it to Bickel in the end zone, and the touchdown was gained after all. But Slade, not seriously injured, was ready for them in the dressing-room after the game, and on the train going home.

His language was unprintable, his attitude insufferable. Fortunately, it was all directed at Johnny.

Bickel, the "Me, too!" of the combination, was an equal offender. The rest of the team waxed wrathful, then subsided out of sheer relief when Johnny took the brunt of it. Peaches came through the car several times, listened a moment to the duo as they wept at the yardage Johnny had cost them by his ineptness, then went on to the comparative security of his compartment.

Just before they disembarked in the home town, Pete Lane said privately to Johnny: "Look, pal, a high-class blockin' back like you don't have to take that clownin' if he don't want to. What is the gag?"

Johnny said: "You remember those Jaybirds? Cham Cohen and Dolly Grey and the others? They are on the agenda for next week. Why get excited about such characters as Slade and Bickel, when there are men to meet?"

"Okay," said Lane. "But when you do clock one of 'em on the kisser, can I be in on it?"

"Sure," said Johnny. "Any time, pal." He went uptown to the boarding-house, thinking of that extra thousand dollars, of the play-offs and of winter sunshine on his Florida beach.

Mrs. Franks met him at the door. "All the way down to the ball-park we went," she said reproachfully. "And you are playing in Baltimore! You never told us!"

Louis complained shrilly: "You never scored no touchdown. I listened on the radio and you never even got your name on it!"

"I am a big bum," Johnny admitted happily. "How's the *kuchen* situation? With a gallon of milk! They do not feed as good as you on those trains."

"You should have told us," she said, smiling. "Not that it mattered. My cousin, near the ball-park, had a radio for Louis to listen on. It was a change. My new place will be open next week, but surely we will see the bird game."

"Jaybirds," said Louis. "They are champs. They will beat the Behemoths three touchdowns. I read it, in the paper."

"He reads," she said, half proudly, half apologetically. "Everything he can get his hands on he reads and maybe understands. Maybe not."

Johnny said: "He's a star performer." He patted Sylvia's shoulder. He sat late and talked with her about Florida. She was a great comfort to him, this lovely lady a year his junior.

IT was the Saturday before the all-important game with the Jaybirds. A last castigation by Slade and Bickel had fallen upon the linemen, but principally upon the broad shoulders

of willing Johnny Carr. Somehow the huge, sprawling men of the forward wall had suffered through it. Their eyes had gone to Johnny and lingered there, and his obdurate steadiness in a refusal to take umbrage gave them strength.

Slade wound up addressing Peaches Maloney: "There it is, Coach. If we get the blocking, we'll knock the Jaybirds off the lot. You know me and Bick. If these dummies give us half a break—"

On this note they departed, Bickel mumbling his agreement with Slade. Peaches surveyed the remainder of his flock and placed a finger alongside his battered nose. He said: "Okay, guys. Go home and sleep it off."

They broke it up, and Johnny went outside. The November evening was cold—December was close at hand. The blue of the autumnal twilight gave a softness to the city, and his heart lifted at the sight of the small girl.

He said: "What? No before-game dinner with Slade?"

Nan Orcutt said: "What makes you think he has first call on my time?"

"Only the fact that he dates you two or three times per week," said Johnny.

NAN put a hand on his forearm. "Johnny, I want to talk with you. I've been doing a lot of thinking about the club and the set-up. Peaches needs an assistant, and if we make money this year, it will be up to me to help select one."

"Not on the market," John said promptly. "I'm quitting after next year, maybe. If we win tomorrow and beat the Goats in the play-offs."

She said: "You do not wish to talk with me?"

A taxi crowded the curb, and Johnny opened the door with a flourish. He said: "Through the park, driver."

She said firmly: "No. . . . I'll buy you a steak at Sullivan's."

"Through the park. I owe it to you, remember?" Johnny closed the door and climbed into the warm tonneau, and the feel of her arm through the fur coat was exciting, but her palm was warmer against his. He had a feeling that she was emotionally tense, that he could perhaps kiss her; but he knew that it would be one of those things. He relaxed, lounging in his own corner of the cab, regarding her profile in the reflected light of lamp-posts. He said: "What did you really want to talk about, sugar girl?"

"Sugar girl! That is Southern," she smiled. Her voice was different, easier. "I wanted to talk about you. I wanted to work up to an apology. Peaches told me today about his offer. He had to—you see, I'm secretary. Johnny—there's a club rule against bonuses. Peaches can't pay you that thousand dollars."

"Oh?" Johnny considered calmly. "You mean I have been taking insults from those two characters for nothing?"

"The club!" she said. "It's helped the team for you to take it. Peaches said so."

"The club?" Johnny smiled at her, rubbing the cartilage over his eye where too many fists had connected when the going got rough. "I've been with a lot of football clubs, baby. I gave them what I had—they paid me what they thought was right. We got no union, darling. We can accept terms—or get out of the game. Blockers and linemen get—mahoola. That's Yankee talk. . . . Loyalty to the club? Sure, on the field—while I'm in the game. Dollar for dollar value, and never shirk a block. That is my business, and I am good at it."

She said: "You are angry. Let me tell you something else: Peaches is going to pay you the thousand—out of his own pocket."

For a moment Johnny was silent. Then he said pleasantly: "That is very nice of him. I appreciate it. I need that grand. But why tell me all this?"

"Because I wanted you to see that Peaches has loyalty to his club. He has had as much experience as you! He has been kicked around, but he made his way up."

Johnny said patiently: "Good for Peaches! I only want to build me a few little places down in Florida, baby. Nothing fancy. Just plain cottages with runnin' water and a view of the Gulf."

She subsided. She said listlessly: "Let's go to Sullivan's. And I have got a date with Dick—at nine-thirty."

He said: "Okay. I'll leave before he arrives."

THEY rode in silence; yet he could not help stealing glances at her. He had been peeking at her from the corners of his eyes, indeed, since their first meeting. He had not hitherto admitted it. It was difficult now for him to do so. But sitting beside her in the intimacy of the warm taxicab, his heart performed tricks he had thought impossible at his advanced age. His last set-to with Cupid, before the war, had been so unfortunate as to leave him cold, he had believed. A slight affair now, he had thought possible and agreeable. But this—

At Sullivan's he paid the driver and followed her pretty legs into the famed steak place. They ordered, and he eschewed beer for milk, thinking of the morrow's game, an unusual thing indeed for Johnny Carr. She tore into a sirloin with vim, and the silence grew until it was a wall between them. He planned a thousand ways of breaking it down in the time which passed, and all failed before his

hurt pride. Nine-fifteen came, and he arose, requesting the check from the waiter.

She said crisply: "My treat, remember?"

He took the tab and put a green-back within the waiter's hand and said, "Some other time, sugar."

She said: "I insist." Her cheeks were pink, and her slanting eyes flashed. "I asked you—"

"But I disappointed you," said Johnny. "Now let me scram before your fancy boy arrives. You know how he detests blockin' backs."

The manager of the famed restaurant appeared. He said gravely: "Miss Orcutt, I got a message for you. It aint good, Miss Orcutt."

Nan said: "Message? From whom?"

The man said: "Bick called, Miss Orcutt. Him and Dick—they had a li'l trouble. Bick says a cab-driver got fresh, and Dick hadda clip him." "So what? Tell me," Nan demanded.

"Well, the way Bick says, the cab-driver hit Dick back, on the jaw. It seems Dick fell down and got a concussion on the curb. Also, Bick says to tell you the cab-driver broke Dick's jaw."

Nan said: "Omigosh! Johnny! He won't be able to play!"

Johnny said, "What a cabby! Why didn't Bick come down himself?"

The manager said in awed accents: "Bick says he tried to help Slade, and the cab-driver hit him too, and broke his nose!"

"I got to get that fellow's name," muttered Johnny. "My hero!"

Nan said: "The game! How could they brawl in the street, with the game coming up tomorrow?"

"No loyalty," suggested Johnny.

"Peaches—we must get to Peaches! Maybe Bick can play. A broken nose can be covered with a guard—"

"Half-a-game Bickel, they call him," Johnny said. "Let us go and commiserate, by all means. There goes my thousand bucks!"

She said: "Who will play wing-back the other half of the game? Omigosh!"

Johnny said: "Peaches will have to decide." He got her onto the street and into a taxi. She glared at the driver with such ferocity that he drove with exceeding care to the hotel where Peaches lived, and shuddered away from Johnny when taking his fare. They went into the lobby, and Peaches was coming out, pale and shaking.

The coach said: "I see you already heard. I was gonna call you. We got to get the team together best we can."

"Up in your suite," said Johnny. "Take it easy, Peaches." He shoved the coach back into the hotel, made him go up to his rooms. Nan walked the floor, hitting a tiny fist into her palm. Johnny said: "Let's not get

too excited. Bick ought to get here pretty soon. We can use that kid John Wade, when Bick is resting. He is a good kid, if he is green. You can depend on guys like Pete Lane and Bob Carter and Avery and the others. You got six, seven backs."

"Bick will be worthless without Slade to spell him," Peaches averred. "He always has been Slade's other self—you know that."

Johnny said: "Keep cool, pal. Just let me call some of the boys."

He labored until midnight. Bickel came in, bruised and incoherent, and it took an hour to convince him that he was now the hero of the hour. Johnny even made him believe he was good to have survived the battle with the terrific cab-driver. It was a difficult task, and when Johnny Carr got home, he was weary.

SYLVIA FRANKS was waiting. She had warm milk tonight, to help him sleep and relieve his nerves. It seems she had picked up the news of the fracas from a short-wave police broadcast while Louis was fooling around with the radio. Its import had struck her, and she was grave.

"It will put the burden on you? But of course," she said. "That is the way with men like you. Always burdens."

He said, touched by her interest: "So what? I get paid. It is a job."

"And a game, too," she nodded. "Two things—a game you love to play, and an important job. I have learned since you came here. Blocking backs. In life they are the do-ers. Other men sit behind desks—blockers go out and do."

"That's too profound for me," Johnny grinned. "Here are two box seats for you and Louis."

Her face lighted as though a thousand candlepower had been turned on. "In all the trouble you did not forget! I never expected you would remember us. You are good, Johnny. You are kind. I wish you luck tomorrow. I wish you luck in Florida. You remembered Louis—that is a good thing."

He said: "I'm just a big bum, but I'd be a big rat if I forgot the fine meals and the goodness of you, Sylvia."

She flushed, standing at the door, her hand on the knob. She was quite the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, he knew in that moment. She said: "It is good to have friends—and love them; is it not, Johnny?"

"You bet! The best thing in the world," he said fervently. "Good night, Sylvia. I'll be lookin' for you in that box tomorrow."

She closed the door softly, and for a moment he did not hear her footsteps going down the hall. He turned out his light and went to bed as quickly as possible. He was eager for the morrow now, and he went swiftly to sleep.

In the morning he wonderingly knew why he had become eager. He went down to the park and hung around. Peaches came betimes, and then Pete Lane. Before noon Bick Bickel came shamefacedly in, bearing tenderly a package. He undid it, and displayed an ingenious iron mask which would protect his huge, bandaged beak. He gulped: "A pal of mine had it. Ironhead Ginnity—remember him? Played a whole season without a bridge in his schnozzle. Guess I c'n play part of a game."

Peaches said: "You're all right, Bick."

By twelve-thirty they were all there, unbidden. They dressed and gathered around Peaches. He lectured them briefly. Then he ended: "I'm appointin' a captain for the day." A hush fell. Only in most important games was a captain designated by Peaches Maloney, who liked to run his own team. Peaches said: "Johnny Carr will have command on the field. Now I know you're handicapped—but go out there and gimme what you got. It'll be enough, win or lose."

It was strange how those simple words from a simple soul like Peaches made a lump rise in the leathery throat of Johnny Carr. He had thought himself as well over that stuff as he was through with love. He trotted out on the field with the football under his arm, and went through the pre-game warm-up with more vigor than he had displayed in many an autumn of play.

At game time he drew a breath and looked at the sidelines, where the boxes sat in a line on the grass. He saw Nan in the owner's box with all the dignitaries. In the next enclosure he spotted Sylvia, attired in a fine fur coat and smart hat. He trotted over and shook hands with Louis, who was all eyes and bursting with fear. Louis said: "We can't win, huh? Without Slade can we win?"

Johnny said: "Keep your fingers crossed, Louis. . . . Can you see all right, Sylvia? Are you warm enough?"

She regarded him with her warm gaze, but before she could reply, a voice behind Johnny said: "Introduce me to your friend?"

It was Nan, bending over the rail, commanding, her cheeks pink. Johnny said relievedly: "They're callin' me. . . . Nan, take care of Mrs. Franks and little Louis. . . . They're my great pals. . . . This is Miss Orcutt, Sylvia, the club secretary." He had to run to the huddle at field's edge.

He won the toss. He elected to receive. His team went back, and he raised his arm, then let it fall. Cham Cohen, a towering giant in scarlet jersey, well remembered from other days, trotted forward. Toe met leather.

It was like black magic. It was like reverting to an earlier time, physically, unmistakably. There had been a youth, all firm, with clean-cut features unmarked by strife. He had run on cleated shoes against a collegiate foe, and in his veins had thrilled the age-old challenge and its answer. He had flown to combat on wings. . . .

That same youth hit Cham Cohen with a block which actually shook the earth. Behind him ran Bick Bickel in

a fantastic headgear like a man from Mars. In a last-moment cut, Bickel went across the field and struck mid-field, where Dolly Grey, a swarthy, swaggering piractical character, laid him low.

Cohen nodded thoughtfully. "You want trouble, huh, pally?"

"Play ball," said Johnny sharply. His humor had for that time departed; he saw things raw and red. His Behemoths were precious charges; he was their leader. In the huddle he strained, and Pete Lane called Bick's signal off the tackle.

Johnny bent, swung, took off. He slammed his body forward, aiming at Cham Cohen's knees. He met something which greatly resembled an iron stanchion.

Bickel lay curled around the ball for no gain. Johnny pried himself from the sward with difficulty. Pete Lane shrugged and called for a quick kick. They had to take Bick off and put in the Wade kid.

The game went like that. Only the heroism of the forward wall staved off Jaybird scoring. At half time neither team had crossed the other's goal—but the Jaybirds had been threatening.



"Well, the way Bick says, the cab-driver hit Dick back . . . broke his jaw."



The big center went backward a full step under the crashing impact of Johnny's plunge.

There was no between-halves chatter. The Behemoths rested. They nursed their hurts and exchanged low comments on whys, wherefores and hows. Peaches had a word for this one and that, but there were no speeches.

At the signal they went out, calmly, to meet their fate. They had been outplayed to a standstill; they had been unable to come near getting past Cham Cohen or Dolly Grey. They stoically started on the field. At the sideline box Johnny lingered.

Louis was sitting between Nan and Sylvia. The two women were in the same box, now. Nan said agonizedly: "It's brutal, Johnny. You haven't had a time out."

"He plays all the time, is that bad?" asked Sylvia brightly. "It is a job, is it not?"

"I aint seen you make a single gain," said Louis disgustedly. "You don't even throw no passes."

"You shouldn't say 'aint,' and it's 'I don't throw *any* passes,'" Johnny chided. "Keep the faith, kids. All is not lost." He winked at the two pretty females and trotted away.

He went on the field; and it was still with him, somehow or other. It had not left him, throughout the action. He had been thwarted; he had been worked over by Cham Cohen and Dolly Grey. He was amazed at the way they gave it to him. He knew they usually reserved that stuff, which inevitably took its toll of them also, for the star of the opposition.

Bickel had done as well as he could, but the vessel was weak, Johnny thought grimly. Slade's understudy was—a second-team man. Without Slade's peculiar bullying brand of driving, Bick was inclined to fold. Wade, the youngster, tried, but was inept. The second half ran away; and somehow, by the grace of Beckstrom, Levy,

Moravitch, Mordecai and the others, inevitable defeat was staved off.

There were three minutes to play when Dolly Grey finally drove his team to the limit. The Jaybirds came thundering behind Cham Cohen to the Behemoth thirty, to the twenty on a quick thrust from the T, for a first down. Dolly Grey took it himself on a quarterback sneak, and Cohen opened a hole which Johnny barely managed to close as Grey hit the eleven for a nine-yard gain.

Johnny knelt behind his sweating line. He saw Grey's eyes flick over the Behemoths. He remained on his knee, watching. Grey gave a quick signal; and the Jaybirds, trying to stay on the crest of this final wave, snapped into formation.

The play formed. It was one Johnny thought he remembered, although such remembrance is the trickiest thing in the world, and in any case did little

good now. It looked like the play where Cham waited, then banged a hole into which Grey came on a reverse which scarcely ever failed to gain a yard. It was only a first down the Jaybirds needed now. . . .

Picking up speed, Johnny lowered his head like a goat and plunged. He hit the center hole, even as Cham was checking. His head plummeted into Cohen's middle. The big center went backward a full step under the crashing impact. Grey piled on Cham's broad back.

The ball rolled, an inert yellow thing, upon the grass. Johnny's loving hands plucked it. Johnny leaped and ran.

It was a pity, but Johnny did not run very fast. He was thirty—there were younger, swifter men. They overhauled him on the Jaybird forty. They knocked him down and jumped on him. His eye bled a bit.

In the huddle Pete Lane looked past the limping Bickel. He said: "I'll throw one, of course. Everybody and his brother knows it."

"There's a Mrs. Franks in a box who doesn't," Johnny told him. "She hasn't even seen a game in ten years."

"Thanks," said Pete, still looking at Johnny. "I keep thinking of that Slade, and how he would be howlin' at us. Sixty-nine play, me laddies!"

THEY formed; Mordecai snapped the ball. The Jaybirds deployed to protect against the pass. Johnny lingered to protect the passer. . . . It was orthodox; it was slightly unreasonable. Pete drew back his arm and fired, yelling: "Johnny!"

Short, in the flat, there was nothing for Johnny to do. He grasped at the leather. It stuck to his fingers. He lunged forward, a bit awkwardly, almost looking for someone to block. A figure loomed ahead of him. It was Bick, his nose-guard slightly awry, his eyes wild. Bick hit Cham amidships.

Johnny shuddered in sympathy and ran a little more. Dolly Grey was coming; being tackled by that apelike gentleman was no bargain, and Johnny did not feel shift. He just ran.

Past him ran Pete Lane, coming like a maniac, following the ball he had thrown short at his own risk. Into Dolly Grey went the quarterback, who was somewhat of an interferer himself. Down went the two of them. Johnny lumbered on. In the far background a gun went off, but it was not until long afterward that Johnny knew this denoted the end of the game when this play should be whistled down. He just knew that he had to run, that there would never be a better chance. Two young men flung themselves upon him, and all the hurts which Cham and Dolly had inflicted grew into a tremendous burst of pain. But he ran on, shrugging off tacklers as if they

were flies. Then four hit him and he slid, still fighting, to earth. The utter humility of failure rode him, and he buried his head in his arms—being careful that the ball was under him.

They pried him loose. He got up, tears coursing unashamedly down his cheeks. He said to Pete: "I wanted this one, really wanted it—for reasons."

"You chump!" said Pete fondly. "You got it. You went five yards over the line with them chaps on your back!"

There seemed to be a lot of noise. People were pouring on the field. Johnny blinked away the mist before his eyes and stared at the scoreboard. A triumphant 6 was against the space marked "Behemoths."

SOMEHOW they were all in Peaches Maloney's suite, although how Sylvia and little Louis got there was a mystery to Johnny. It was all somewhat foggy. He was a bit battered about the head, which would account for it. Peaches gave him a shot of brandy, and it snapped him out of it. He beamed upon the company and said: "Well, well, well, we won a ball game, huh!"

Nan Orcutt was sitting on the arm of his chair. Across the room, Peaches seemed to be hovering over Sylvia, and Louis was wearing the headgear in which Peaches had won All-Professional League rating at tackle. Nan said: "Peaches went and bet a thousand we'd win. So you can take the bonus after all."

Johnny shook his head. "No bonus. That game was worth playin'. It was a nice, tight game. I couldn't take a bonus for that game."

Peaches said: "Don't be a dummy, you dummy! It's a deal we made. I knew the club would not hold still for it when I made it. I figured it right, and it came out right. You get one thousand bucks."

Johnny said: "Wait, Peaches. You'll get it. It's like this—when you put into a game what I found myself puttin' into that one—no bonus. I was high today, Peaches. I couldn't take extra pay for bein' captain of the crowd out there today. You know what I mean, Peaches?"

The coach said: "Oh! Sure! I get it, pal. You're ready to quit, huh?"

"That's it," said Johnny. "I'll get by on the play-off dough."

Peaches said: "Look, Johnny, I got this dough. I got maybe five grand more, and then with my cut another ten grand. The horses, Johnny, they always got my dough. You could do me such a favor—"

Johnny found Nan holding onto his hand, regarding him with large eyes, which was in a way she had never looked at him before. He said slowly: "There's a piece adjoining that place down in Florida. It could make a nice development. Larger than I thought. A nice house could be built—one a woman might like—"

Sylvia said complacently: "That's what I told you—something you had left out. And now can we get these big men something to eat, Nan?"

NAN said: "A house on a beach? It sounds nice, Johnny."

"Yeah," said Johnny. "It will be nice, all right."

"Sixty-five—seventy-four—a hunnert and five," shrieked Louis. "I am Johnny. I am scoring a touchdown." He ran smack into a chair and went flat on his back. He got up cross-eyed, and Sylvia cried out, snatching at him. Peaches was before her, rubbing the back of the boy's neck, handling him expertly, smiling reassurance.

Sylvia's warmth was as summer sun on Florida sand.

Nan said: "Come on, Johnny. Let us go and allow these folks to get acquainted. I want to talk to you. I have a little money to invest, also."

"Nothin' fancy," Johnny said. "Just a nice, quiet little place." They went out in the hall. . . . She was a bigger armful than he had expected.

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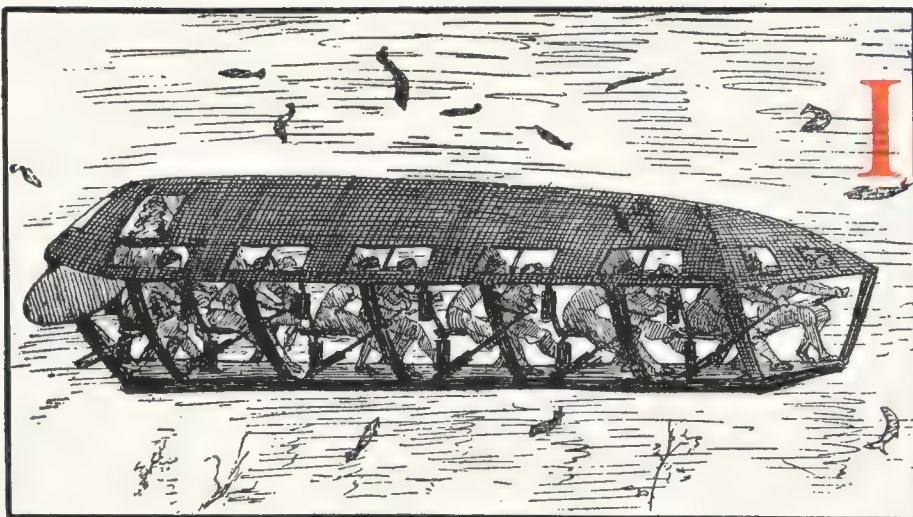
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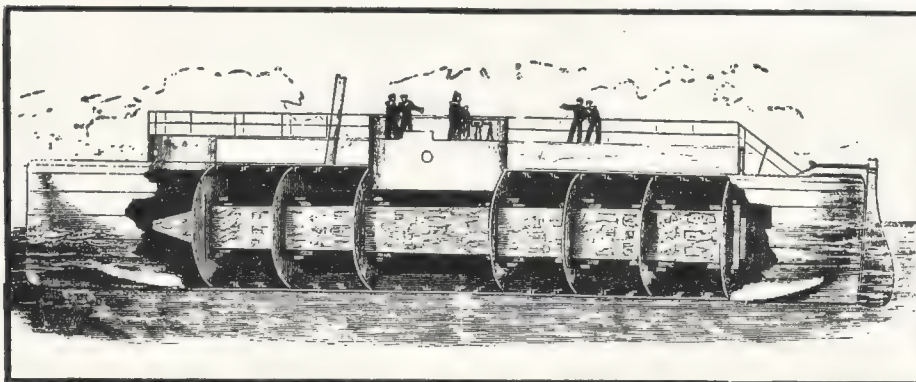
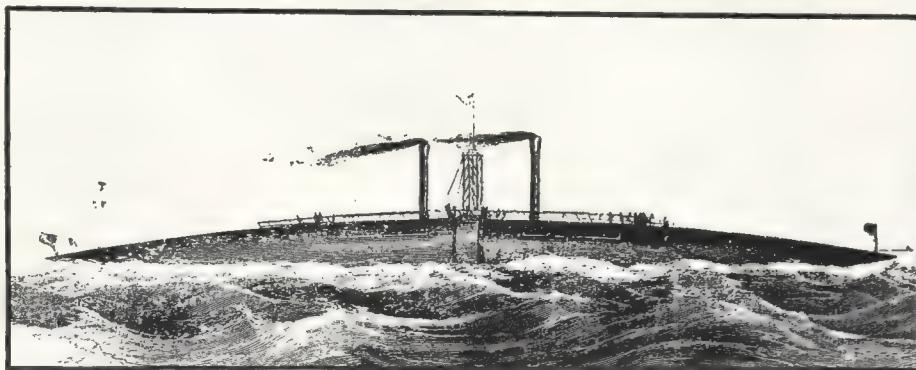
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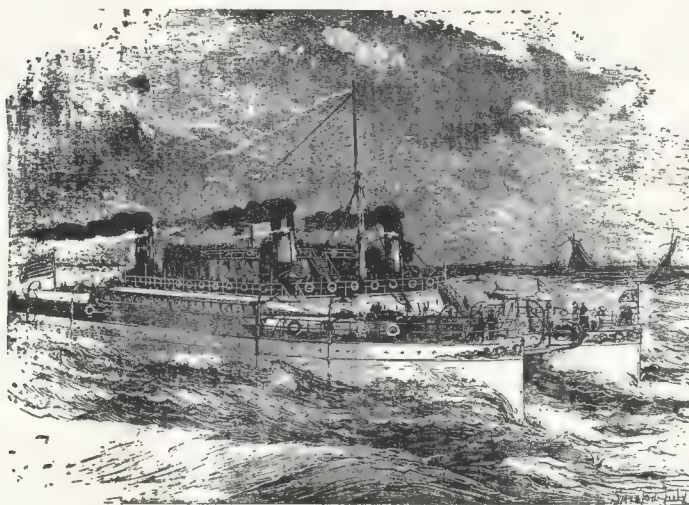


BELIEVE IT OR NOT. Cornelius van Drebbel, Dutchman, constructed a submarine rowboat around 1520 that actually worked! According to the "Chronicle of Alkmaar" by C. Van Der Wruide, published in 1645, Van Drebbel built a ship that one could row and navigate under water from Westminster to Greenwich. In this boat a person could see under the surface of the water, and

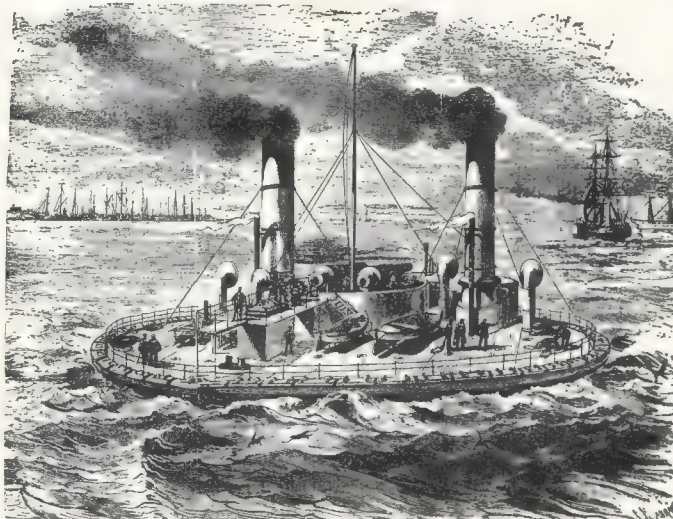
Ross Winan's Roller-Ship (at right) was intended to revolutionize transatlantic traffic. Built in 1858, she was supposed to cross the Atlantic in four days. Capable of carrying twenty first-class passengers, the ship was propelled by a ring of blades revolved round the hull midships at high speed. The Winans Co. built several ships, but after severe tests for years was forced to admit that the complicated machinery frequently broke down.



Cleopatra's Needle Goes to London!
—The transportation of the Egyptian obelisk from Alexandria to the Victoria Embankment in London was not a small feat. A special vessel had to be built to harbor the obelisk, and the voyage of the *Cleopatra*, as that vessel was named, in tow of the small steamer *Olga* was a major event in 1877. Picture at left shows a section through the *Cleopatra* with the obelisk embedded in her hull.



Channel Steamer *Castalia* was the largest twin-hulled ship ever built. By a length of 290 feet and sixty feet breadth, she could accommodate one thousand passengers. The *Castalia* was built in 1874 and was extraordinarily steady, but so slow that travelers in a hurry avoided her.

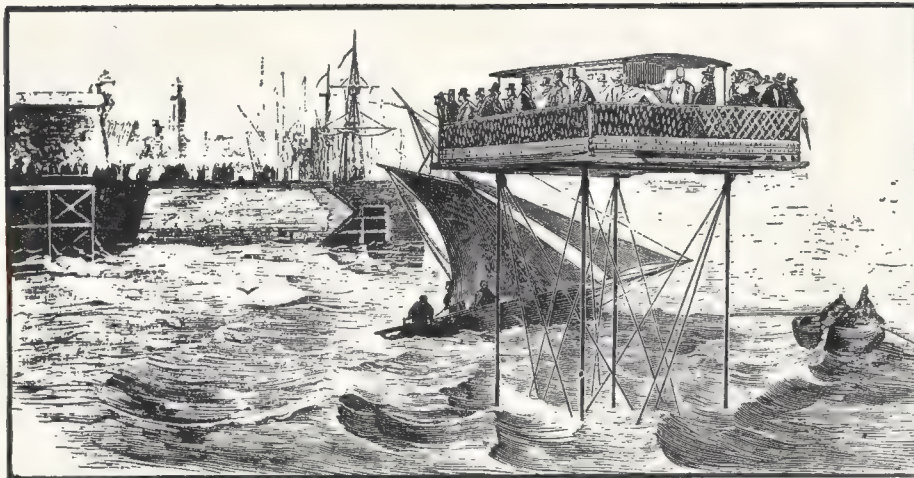


The Circular Man-of-War *Admiral Popov* was built by the Russian Navy at Nicolaieff in 1875 and driven by six propellers distributed around the craft. Her circular hull was supposed to give a steady platform for her two big guns. The diameter of her surface measured 121 feet.

at Sea

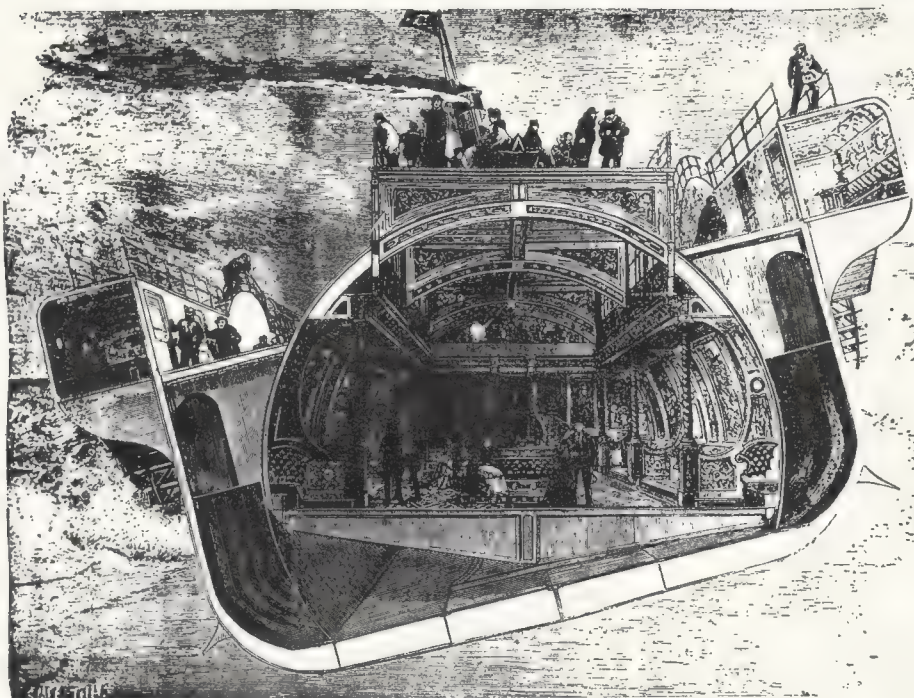
without candlelight. The submarine carried twelve rowers besides her passengers.

It is said that she made a journey of several hours in a submerged position at a depth of twelve to fifteen feet, and tradition adds that King James I, the personification of caution, actually ventured his Royal Person in one of Drebbel's submarine trips!



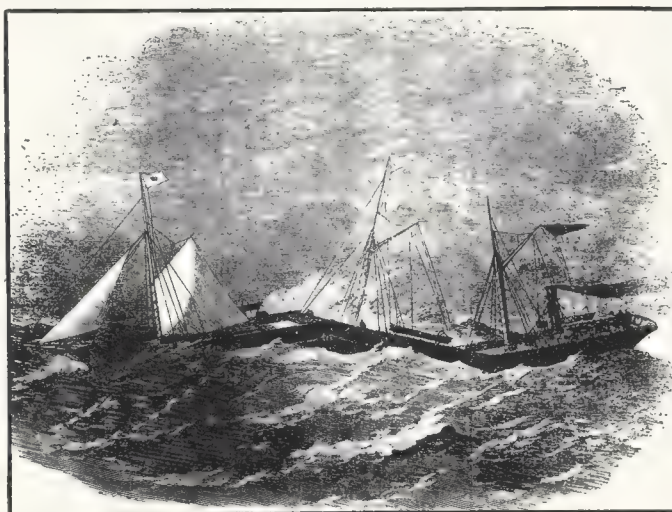
(Above) The Rolling Bridge. The towns of St. Servan and St. Malo in France were connected by a rolling bridge across the river Ronce in 1874. The tide is here subject to great fluctuations, retreating so that the bed of the estuary may be crossed by foot, and again rising to a height of several yards. Picture shows rolling bridge at high tide.

Old prints from Three Lions,
Schoenfeld Collection.



(At left) Sir Henry Bessemer's saloon ship. The famous inventor of the Bessemer Converter was a poor sailor and therefore thought it necessary to create some anti-rolling inventions for ships. He built the Bessemer saloon ship with her main feature, a swinging saloon, pivoted on a central bearing, and kept level by a rigidly suspended pendulum weight beneath. Bessemer spent forty-one thousand pounds for his vessel which did not meet the expectations set in her. Picture shows section through the *Bessemer*.

(Below) Sinking of the *Monitor*: While towed by the *Rhode Island* to attack Confederate positions at Beaufort, a gale made it advisable to cut the hawser hard on dangerous Diamond Shoals. Shortly after midnight the morning of December 31st, 1862, the illustrious craft went down, taking four officers and twelve men to a watery grave; forty-nine were saved by boats launched from the *Rhode Island*.



The *Sea Serpent*—This fantastic ship of three single sections was built in 1863, with the idea of running coal from Newcastle to London. "She will be able to detach one of her sections at a port to discharge its cargo while the rest of the ship continues the voyage to her final destination. On the return journey the section left behind can be joined up, as a goods wagon can be attached to a train," claimed her constructor. After her trial trips, no more was heard of her.

Snake River Jim

Our rapscaillon medicine-peddler comes upon murder in the night, acquires a buried-treasure map—and so meets with the greatest of his adventures.

HARNESS creaked in the lazy night. A gaunt coyote keened drearily at the thin rind of yellow moon, and close at hand a jackrabbit watched Snake River Jim with phosphorescent eyes. Maude and Susie walked with the bored pace of a well-fed team, and the gold-and-red medicine wagon rolled with soft squealings of the too-dry axles.

Snake River sighed deeply. Times were tough; civilization was crowding him, pushing his economic back against the wall, and for the first time in a good many years, futility was in his mind.

"It's a dirty shame, Maude," he said to the off horse. "You get your grass and oats, and even a bucket of corn now and then; and all you do is take life easy. Now me, I've got to work!"

Maude's ears cocked back in surprise. Snake River grinned; after years of riding behind the great gray team, it amused him sometimes that he expected an answer when he talked.

"That's right," he said, "ignore me! But you won't be so cocky when I sell you off for eating money." He sighed again. "Fact is, I'm broke, plumb broke; where we'll eat next lies smack in the laps of the gods."

He straightened then, wise old eyes keen and alert, waiting for the sounds again. Shooting was not strange to the land; but at night at ten miles from the closest town, it spelled trouble of some kind.

There had been three shots, the first apart from the others. But now there was only the brooding silence of the night.

Snake River calculated. The shots had been close, a mile away at the most. Beefing, bushwhack, his thoughts ran from one solution to another and settled on none. There were but the three dull cracks in the stillness, and then no more. He shrugged, his mind going back to original thoughts.

Business had been bad, even worse than that. The medicine-show game was dying out, still struggling, but



"On your way, Grandpa! And"—the horseman's tone was suddenly

breathing its last. Newfangled men were coming into the country, opening stores where people could buy patent medicines or have medicines mixed on doctors' orders, and Snake River's Elixir of Life was suffering accordingly.

He was proud of the Elixir; he made it himself of good drinking alcohol, coloring matter and a bit of flavoring. He'd made it for twenty years, and never had a customer come back with a complaint. Snake River knew as well as any man that alcohol was the greatest germ-killer in the world; even doctors used it to swab instruments and wounds. It cured snake bite in men and distemper in dogs. It stopped mange and eased aching

joints. He concocted it in three colors, green for animals, red for children and amber for adults; and right now there were whole families who'd taken dosages of it all their lives.

The trouble was, not enough families did it. And the new generation liked the fancy bottles and fancier smells of the patents put up back East. For five months now, Snake River had barely made a living, and his flaring white mustache was beginning to droop from the dullness of his spirit.

"Git up," he said to Susie, "'fore I take a whip to you."

Susie ignored him, as usual, plodding along with the pot-bellied stride of a horse who knew the world was

Hits a Pot of Gold



by WILBUR S.
PEACOCK

ing toward the back of the caravan wagon.

"Watch him," he said briefly, and Snake River heard saddle leather squeak as he dismounted.

Snake River had drawn the reins automatically; now Maude and Susie stood in somnolent indifference. Snake River could feel the first shaking of anger in his shoulders; bushwhacking like this went against his grain.

"Mister," he said, "I haven't got a damned thing you want. Now put away that gun before you get into trouble."

"Shut up," the man said tonelessly, and the medicine showman lapsed into brooding silence.

He marked the man in the dim moonlight, marked him well in his memory. He was heavy, shoulders wide and lumpy, a flat black Stetson atop a face marked by a ragged mustache and a twisting white scar. He remembered the scar particularly, because such a thing couldn't be changed like clothes.

The caravan wagon jounced a bit; evidently the second man had climbed onto the rear steps. Then the back door slammed open. Glass broke with a brittle sound. The second man was inside, a flare of light through the front curtain showing he had lit a match.

"Nobod!" his voice sang out.

The wagon bounced again; and then the second man was astride his horse once more. He rode around the wagon to his partner's side.

"What's going on?" Snake River Jim demanded. "Seems to me you're pretty high-handed."

"Mister," the second man said, "we're deputies. We had a shoot-out just a few minutes ago with a beeper. We figured maybe he hid in your wagon." He lit a quick-twisted cigarette. "If you see him, just keep on going; don't stop, or maybe you might catch a slug or two yourself."

Snake River felt his pulse hammering at his temple. This vulpine-faced killer might call himself a deputy now, but he'd just missed a hanging rope a few years back. He'd

as cold as a rattlesnake's warning—"keep your mouth shut."

safe. The caravan wagon tilted one wheel into a road rut and then straightened, harness tightening as the team pulled it over a rise in the road.

Snake River lit a cheroot, rolling the smoke over his tongue. Far ahead, he could see the lights of Cherokee Town: they'd be there about midnight. He grinned, remembering the year before; he and some of the boys had cut quite a swath there one night. Fact was, they'd just about drunk up the mixings of an entire batch of the Elixir of Life.

Snake River flicked ashes. There wouldn't be much drinking and hell-raising this trip, not unless the free show and spiel he put on each night

on the side-stage sold more Elixir than had become the custom, lately.

He heard the whicker of a horse in the brush; and without thinking, his hand went down and came up with the Sharps. It bellowed like a cannon when the trigger was pulled, and if the ball didn't hit—well, the roar even scared Snake River at times.

But he had no time for lifting the rifle. A horseman spurred out of concealment on his left, even as he watched the right side of the road. There was a six-gun in his hand, and it looked deadly in the moonlight.

"Hold it, Mister," the gunman said gently. "Just hold it."

A second horseman appeared from the right, riding past Snake River, go-

been on the short end of a beefing charge then, and only a judge bribed in the right place had saved his neck.

"What'd you say your names were?" Snake River asked.

The burly man spat, and then laughed softly. "We didn't say, Grandpa. Now, on your way! And"—his tone was suddenly as cold and deadly as a rattlesnake's warning—"keep your mouth shut."

They were gone then, fading into the underbrush, hoofs making slashing sounds for a moment that gradually died away.

Snake River sat for a long moment, dusting off his swearing and displaying it for Maude's and Susie's benefit; then he went about the wagon, climbing down over the wheel, and lit a match to determine the damage done inside. Three bottles had broken, and the pungent odor of alcohol was in the air. He swept up the glass by lantern-light, and then, picking up the lantern, he returned to the seat and clucked the team into motion.

The night was silent again, and within minutes his anger had disappeared. He drowsed lazily on the seat, lulled by the sway of the wagon. The town came closer, as he could see when he topped a rise, but he was in no hurry and let the team amble along.

The wagon rounded a turn, and it was then the lantern-light reached out and touched the man who lay so slackly at the side of the road. His head came up and hands clawed at the ground. He raised himself, and his voice was almost a whisper:

"Please, Mister," he called, "I need help."

Snake River jerked the reins, and then was on the road with the agility of a man half his age. He lifted the man, catching him up in strong arms, and staggered to the wagon. He laid him on the single bunk and then retrieved the lantern. He made a quick examination, and knew there was nothing he could do. And reading the knowledge in the old showman's eyes, the stranger managed a smile.

"I wasn't quick enough," he said. "Codley jumped me first, and then his partner. They shot before I could get away clear."

Snake River upended a box and sat beside the bunk. A cold hard knot was growing in his heart; this man had been shot twice in the back.

"Take it easy, old-timer," he said. "You'll be all right."

Death was in the wagon then, cold and evil. Snake River felt it, but the expression on his face didn't change. He touched the withered hand in sympathy, and wrinkled fingers closed over his own.

"I got drunk, Mister," the old man said, and his voice wavered like a

flickering shadow, lantern-light shining on his pink scalp through thin hair. "I got drunk and showed the map. Codley saw it."

His eyes closed wearily and then blinked open. They saw past Snake River, saw something real and close at hand which had no substance.

"What's left is Tommy's," he said clearly. "Y'understand?"

"Sure, sure," Snake River said reassuringly.

He watched the old man die, breath coming harder and harder. The man was old, older even than the showman, and the years had sucked all vitality from his skinny body, leaving it withered and sere and shortened. A bubble of blood broke on his lips, and Snake River wiped it gently away. He coughed and his eyes came open again.

"I just remembered," he said in a barely audible tone. "I just remembered today. Everybody called me crazy, and I just remembered today." He sighed. "It's all there, thousands and thousands and thou—"

He coughed rackingly and shook his head as though clearing a growing mist from his eyes.

"Turn on the lights," he said. "Turn them on and help me count. By God, Daniels, we've only got a few hours to hide the money and get away." He struggled to sit up, but fell back again.

"It's Tommy's, Mister," he said, and his voice rose. "They called me crazy, but I just remembered. . . . Please help me, Mister; Codley got me in the back."

He was dead then, propped upright in Snake River Jim's hands, and his head went sidewise like a tired sleeper's. The showman eased the body back onto the bunk, and shivered despite himself.

The pitiful story was easy to read. The old man had hidden the location of a treasure in his mind. And then, remembering, he had disclosed his knowledge. Bushwhackers had caught him, and now he was dead from their bullets.

The old man's hand slid from the bunk, and Snake River saw then the twisted paper caught in tight fingers. He probed it loose, unfolding and holding it to the light. Lines wriggled in a map, and words were crudely pencilled in at various points.

"Cherokee Town," marked a series of squares. "Salt Flat," was a lattice-work of lines. "Skull Cañon," was two dark lines surmounted by a skull and crossbones. And in the right-hand corner, beneath an inverted V marked "Leaning rocks" two words were carefully printed. "Money here," they said.

Snake River Jim folded the paper and thrust it into his pocket. Rising, he covered the body with a blanket, and then went about the wagon and

climbed into the spring seat. Cold anger coiled in him, and he searched the horizon for a moment, seeking the murderers. He was alone in the night, and there was nothing he could do but go ahead.

"Hup, Maude; git along, Susie," he said, and flipped the reins; and the grays surged into the harness, on the last few miles to Cherokee Town ahead.

It was midmorning, and already the heat had sucked all night-time coolness out of the air. Cherokee Town drowsed somnolently, alive only in spots, a buggy or two before the two general stores, and horses at the hitch-racks before the saloons.

Snake River Jim stood before the lot on which his red-and-gold medicine wagon was placed. His shoulder-length white hair was no whiter than the high-crowned Stetson he wore, and his goatee and sweeping mustaches were alive with the arrogance of living. Creamy trousers were tucked into gleaming black hand-stitched boots, and his vest and belt, of snakeskins cunningly sewn together in colorful patterns, creaked with each breath.

He smiled at Cherokee Town, liking it for its peace and quiet. Almost two thousand people were here, solidly implanted, nurtured by the new railroad, and growing—the stableman had said pridefully—at better than twenty families a year. The war between the States had ripped through here years before, and ugly scars still remained on some buildings; but now the town was in the ways of peace, and its prosperity was a shining thing.

Not that it had seemed so nice the night before. He had come into town in the early morning, and the place had been dead of all life. Even the Sheriff's office was closed; Jim had wandered for minutes, seeking information as to where he lived. At last he had pounded on the door at the undertaking building, and when a tousle-haired man had appeared, gun in hand, he had forced the other to open his door and take charge of the old man's body.

"Who is he?" Snake River had asked, but the undertaker had shook his head.

"I don't know," he admitted. "I'm just helping out my brother; I'm from out of town."

"Well, where's the Sheriff?"

"He's out of town for a couple of days." The undertaker looked at the body. "Who shot him?"

Snake River shrugged. "I don't know," he said. "I found him on the road. Look, I'll be in town for a while; if you see the Sheriff, tell him my medicine wagon is in Fogarty's lot."

He had turned away then, going toward his bunk and a few hours of sleep. Hell might break loose when



the Sheriff returned, for naturally Snake River would be under suspicion. And then again, the killers would surely hear of his bringing in the body; they might try another bit of bush-whacking. But knowing there was nothing else he could do for the moment, Snake River turned into his bunk and finally dropped off to sleep, to awake early in the morning, and to dress and step out of the wagon which was his home.

HE went down the street, approving the boardwalk on either side, tipping his hat with grave gallantry to two women he passed, stopping to scratch behind a dog's ears. The dog adopted him for a block, then treed a cat and began a belligerent vigil just below.

Snake River sighed. Breakfast had been good, paid for with part of the forty-two dollars his Colt hand-gun had brought from the stableman. And now he headed toward the three saloons to gather information and perhaps answers to the problems which had risen the night before on a lonely road.

His cheroot jutted, black as tar, from his teeth, and he smoked with the placidity of a man content with the world. He passed the blacksmith shop, nodding at the smith in greeting, and went ahead, past the first general store. Odors of coal-oil and

candy and sorghum and ginger and leather and soap came through the door, and he breathed deeply, liking them.

Then he was at the Dancing Lady, and he pushed through the swinging doors, blinking against the dimness. A swamper mopped dispiritedly at the floor; and behind the bar, a slick-haired man polished glasses with a bar towel.

"Beer," Snake River Jim said cordially, and hooked his boot-heel over the rail.

The bartender stared, awed by the imposing appearance of the showman, then drew a round-bellied glass of beer and placed it near Snake River's hand. Snake River drank slowly, finishing each swallow by smoothing back his white mustaches with his forefinger. He sighed in good humor, and his voice was casual.

"Daniels and Codley been around yet this morning?" he asked.

"Aint seen 'em," the bartender answered. "Why, you looking?"

Snake River shrugged. "Not necessarily," he admitted. "Just got into town this morning, and thought if they were around, I'd say hello."

"I aint seen 'em," the bartender said without interest. "Another beer?"

"Fill 'er up," Snake River said, and relinquished his glass. He contemplated the refill moodily, thoughts whirling in his mind. "I'm also look-

ing for another man," he finished. "I don't know his name, just that he's about five foot seven, kind of baldish and dried up."

The bartender sucked his teeth reflectively. "Seems like you want to meet a lot of people, Mister," he said. "Who are you?"

Snake River Jim laughed, and good humor lifted the corners of the swamper's slack mouth. Even the bartender lost a bit of his antagonism.

"I've got a medicine show down on Fogarty's lot," Snake River explained. "When a man like myself enters a strange town, he likes to look up the local celebrities and give them a free bottle of his medicine."

"Oh!" The bartender looked over the answer and decided he liked it. "Well, it's your business, I guess, but I sure wouldn't call Daniels and Codley any celebrities. Sansom's gunmen might be a better name."

"Sansom?"

The bartender nodded.

"Bart Sansom—he's the banker."

Snake River drank his beer, trying to fit in the new information. Evidently Codley and Daniels were just hired men in last night's play.

"As to the other," the bartender said, "I don't figure him out."

Snake River smiled. "A little man," he explained again, "maybe even a bit touched in the head."

"Oh, you mean Crazy Pete. Shucks, Mister, he aint no celebrity; he's the town fool."



"It's Tommy's, Mister," he said, and his voice rose. "Please help me, Mister; Codley got me in the back."

"Sol" Snake River Jim said judiciously.

"Yeah! He used to be a big shot—oh, twenty or thirty years ago, but since then he's just been cracked." He grinned in remembrance. "Always talking about his fortune, and how he'd buy and sell the pack of us, once he remembered where it was. I always felt sorry for the poor devil, kind of."

"Rather pitiful, eh?"

"You might say that. He was shot up in the war and got his head cracked. If it hadn't been for his wife, he'd have been put in some loony bin. But she took care of him; and after she died, his boy took over."

"And who's the boy?"

"Oh, he's Tom Weatherby, who works at the Adams General Store. Mighty nice fellow, with a good-looking wife and two hell-raising kids. Guess everybody feels sorry for him, 'count of the old man."

Snake River finished his beer. "Where'll I find this Weatherby?"

The bartender jerked a thumb. "End of Main Street," he said. "Last house on the right; you can't miss it."

"Thanks!" Snake River Jim turned away. "Come on down to Fogarty's lot when you have the chance," he said. "I've got a bottle of Elixir of Life free for the asking."

He shoved through the swinging doors and turned to his right. A stir

of movement across the street and slightly behind him turned his head. The gunmen of the night before watched silently, and he felt a faint flush of heat touch his neck. A third man was with the gunmen, mustache black on his upper lip, his fawn coat and fancy-flowered dress strangely out of place in the town. To Snake River's mind, he looked more like a riverboat gambler, than a banker, if he were Bart Sansom.

Then Jim went on, walking with a natural swinging grace alien to his years. He took a final puff on his cheroot and then tossed it into the street. The plank walk vibrated under his polished boots, and he breathed deeply, savoring air, impervious to the morning heat. He saw the sign, Adams General Store, and stopped for a moment, asking for Tom Weatherby.

"He's to home," the clerk said. "Kid's sick, or something."

"Thanks!" Snake River said, and went on down the street.

He stopped at the white picket fence which surrounded the last house. It was a small building, four rooms at most, but it had an air of solidity and cleanliness and living which Snake River liked.

He pushed through the gate and went around the side, following the sounds of someone splitting kindling. The axman paused, seeing him, and

wiped perspiration from his forehead with the back of his hand.

"Morning!" he said.

"Good morning," Snake River said.

He nodded to himself. There was a resemblance between the man who had died last night and this man, even though Tom Weatherby was four inches taller and fifty pounds heavier.

"I've got bad news," Snake River said bluntly, knowing this was the only way. "Your Dad was killed last night, out on the Cherokee road." He coughed, seeing the incredulous pain in the man's eyes. "I'm sorry as hell to have to bring the news, but it seems like it was my duty."

"How, Mister?" Tom Weatherby said. "How'd it happen?"

Snake River Jim talked then, telling everything he knew of the shooting, omitting only the details of the map which Crazy Pete Weatherby had clutched in dead fingers. And Tom Weatherby listened, his fingers knotted about the ax-helve.

AN hour later, there was little talking. Grace Weatherby, Tom's wife, sat, dry-eyed now, at the kitchen table beside her husband, and the two boys huddled fearfully in their chairs, shaken by the horror of what they had heard. Tom Weatherby was silent, too, both elbows leaning on the table, watching the showman with steady pained eyes.

Snake River sipped a cup of coffee which had literally been forced on him by Grace Weatherby, and on impulse, he pulled the crumpled map from his pocket and laid it on the table.

"Your Dad had this in his hand when he died," he explained. "He seemed to think it was pretty valuable. Anyway, I guess it belongs to you."

Tom Weatherby picked up the map, studying it. "Then it was true," he said. "There really was a fortune hidden." Rage touched his features. "I'll kill Codley and Daniels," he finished. "I'll gutshoot them to death."

"Tom!" his wife said and touched his hand with hers.

Snake River shook his head. "That won't do it; that won't solve anything," he said. "Bring them into court and I'll testify."

"You!" Tom Weatherby's eyes came up, suddenly suspicious. "Why should you—"

"He didn't have to tell us, Tom," Grace Weatherby said gently.

Tom Weatherby flushed. "Sorry," he apologized. Then he spread his hands. "I wouldn't have a chance," he finished. "Sansom could buy the law here."

Snake River touched the map. "I don't know what this is all about," he said, "but the way you talk, there must be enough money there to see that everything is straight, even if you have to bring a lawyer from back East." He finished his coffee. "What is that money talk all about?" he asked.

TOM WEATHERBY'S eyes clouded with memory. "Dad worked in a bank years ago," he said. "His story was that, when the enemy came through, he had orders to bury the bank's ready cash and then light out for safety. Of course he never told that story around town; we convinced him robbers might find it first. Around town, he just talked about the fortune he'd have some day. We figured he was just—just touched in the head, because of being shot so badly."

Snake River swallowed. "Then the money could be there?" he asked.

"I suppose so." Tom Weatherby was indifferent.

"Whose would it be—now?"

Tom Weatherby shrugged. "Finders, keepers, I guess."

"Let me go after it. If it's there, I'll bring it back, and then—"

"No!" Suspicion tightened Weatherby's face. "Why should I—"

Grace Weatherby reached out and took the map from her husband's fingers. She handed it to Snake River, and the trust in her eyes was complete and unafraid.

"Bring it back, if it's there," she said; and when her husband tried to speak, she finished: "Tom, this gentleman brought you news of Grandpa,

when he needn't. And he could have followed the map; it's clear enough. Don't be a fool; maybe like he says, we could use the money to convict Sansom and his gang. That is, if there is any money."

"Thank you, ma'am," Snake River Jim said. "I figure it would be best for me to go, for I can act as though I'm peddling Elixir from farm to farm, while if you were to go, somebody might get wise."

He folded the map and placed it in his pocket, Weatherby watching silently.

"Now listen, Tom," Snake River Jim said, "use your head. Don't go getting into any shooting-scape; you owe it to your wife and boys to stay alive. According to the map, this hiding-place can't be too far. I'll hire a rig and head that way. Win or lose, I shall probably be back early tonight."

"All right," Tom Weatherby said, and his face was granitic. "But if you don't show up by morning, I'll go looking for the men who got Dad. If you aren't here to testify, as you say you will, I'll pack a court in a holster. Is that clear?"

"Plenty." Snake River Jim rose. "Good day, ma'am. Be good, boys."

He settled his white Stetson on his head, tapping it into place. He smiled a bit at the solemn group.

"Things are tough at times," he said, "but they always get better."

Bowing gallantly, he opened the screen door and went down the steps. Behind him voices sounded, and he shook his head. The hour hadn't been pleasant.

His steps were solid and full-weighted as he paced the walk toward the medicine wagon. He felt nerves tighten his neck, as he saw Codley and Daniels near the stable, but he gave them only a passing nod and went directly into the wagon. Without hesitation, he filled a small box with bottles of Elixir. He frowned, sensing something out of place; and looking about, saw that the bunk's blanket had been turned back. A spider of apprehension crawled his spine, for now he knew that Sansom's gunmen had discovered Crazy Pete had been in the wagon. Blood, crusted and dry now, was on the blanket edge, and the gunnies had discovered it. . . .

Snake River Jim was dishonest; he was the first to admit the fact, and somehow, he had come to take pride in that as much as another man might brag about his honesty. He had proved his ability to fleece the gullible, with cards and dice, with wheels and logs, and with various other grifts which came easily to his talents.

For fifty years he had not held an honest job; honest, that is, in the sense that he drew a salary for labor other men enjoyed. And now, with a treas-

ure map in his pocket, his conscience wrestled with his soul.

It would be so easy, provided the long-lost money was in concealment, slyly to abstract a great deal, hiding it at another place, and then bring back the other share for Weatherby. Or again, a report that the cache was empty could be made a logical thing, and he could decamp, no one the wiser, with all the booty.

It was a test to strain the fiber of a saint—which most assuredly Snake River Jim was not.

Snake River sat on the spring seat of his hired rig and brooded. His face was calm, his flowing mustache and goatee white and jaunty. His boots were cocked on the kickboard, and he had laid the Stetson aside, wind ruffling his long snowy hair. He wore the Colt hand-gun now, having sold the Sharps to regain the six-gun from the stableman.

The blacks stepped lightly in the fading sunlight; and looking back, Snake River could see that no one followed. Impatience had struck at him, when he had thought it necessary to stop and sell Elixir to an isolated farm, for that necessitated passing on what news he had of the outer world, and the partaking of a spot of homemade brew. But at last feeling safe, he had struck directly at the spot indicated on the crude map as the hiding-place of the money.

Salt Flat was on his left, a barren dimple in the earth where a forgotten sea had lapped frothy waves in bygone ages. Skull Cañon lay ahead; and when Snake River topped a rise, he understood its name, for the cañon branched and broke and thrust sandstone walls, until looking downward at it, a man could see the shadowed outline of a grinning skull.

Snake River shivered; somehow, the skull was symbolic of the death the hidden fortune had brought to at least one man. And then he straightened, conscious of the flat money-belt at his waist. This was opportunity smashing at his door, this was fortune beckoning with both hands, this was the pot of gold at the end of an earthly rainbow.

He thought of that and a hundred things, and then shrugged helplessly. He knew he was crooked, but it was an honest crookedness. At least the other man always had a chance at winning. And Snake River decided Tom Weatherby deserved that chance. If money were hidden, and if he brought it back to Weatherby, then dexterous fingers and a deck of cards should give him a good chance of retrieving that which he could not steal in cold blood.

Snake River nodded, pleased and smug with himself. It was a nice point of honor; he would rob the man

in a nice gentlemanly style. And should Weatherby decline to play, then it would be only fair to claim, say, a fifth of the money found in its hiding-place.

Snake River agreed with himself and consulted the map again. He took bearings from the crude drawing and then swung the team straight across the field to his right, going toward the shallow valley close at hand. The trip had not been long or arduous; evidently the night the bank's assets had been hidden, the principals had decided that security, not distance, was the most important item to consider.

Springs creaked, and the rig's wheels drew sparks from the flinty rock at the valley's edge. Snake River saw then that the valley was really a very shallow cañon, rock-studded and desolate. He called the team to a halt and sat for a long moment, fixing details in his mind.

Then he studied the map again, trying to understand the cryptic markings—baffled for the moment.

A hillock was on the map, but he could not find it at the valley's edge. Three trees were represented, but only scrub growth was here now. Twenty years had vanished into time since the treasure had been hidden, and the seasons had eroded the land with casual indifference.

Then he found the conical rock depicted on the map, and gradually, he made out the general scheme of things as they must have been years before. He nodded to himself and climbed from the rig. Tying the reins to scrub oak, he half-walked, half-slid down the shallow slope and began his search.

"Money here," the notes read; but the words sprawled so that they covered, on the map, an area fully two acres in size. The only clue was an inverted V made by two slabs of rock leaning together. He searched for the rocks.

MINUTES passed, rushing with incredible speed. Night lowered, until he hunted in a twilight that fast deepened into darkness. He quartered the land with the persistence of a hunting dog, until there was a trembling in his legs and perspiration wilted his collar.

"Fool's errand," he said at last to himself and stopped to light a black cheroot. He flipped the match away, watching it idly burn into a curling strip of ash; and then he grinned, shaking his head a bit in wonder.

He went directly to the leaning stones.

In the thrall of excitement he had forgotten the changes brought about by the years. He had passed the rocks half a dozen times, ignoring their camouflage of scrubby bushes which covered them so concealingly.



"Money here," the notes read; but on the map they covered an area fully two acres in size.

He swung the spade, cutting away the growth, disclosing the rocks and the dirt and sand which had almost filled the space between. He began to dig. There was a prescience in him that this was the spot. Logic told him that, and he burrowed like a dog after a bone, sand and dirt slipping back past his legs, the sound of spading sharp and clear in the evening.

In ten minutes he was at the keystone, and elation touched him when he saw the flat wedges of rock which held it in place. He pried them loose, levering the blade of the spade against the keystone and throwing his weight upon the handle. Muscles bulged in his back, and he could feel the strain.

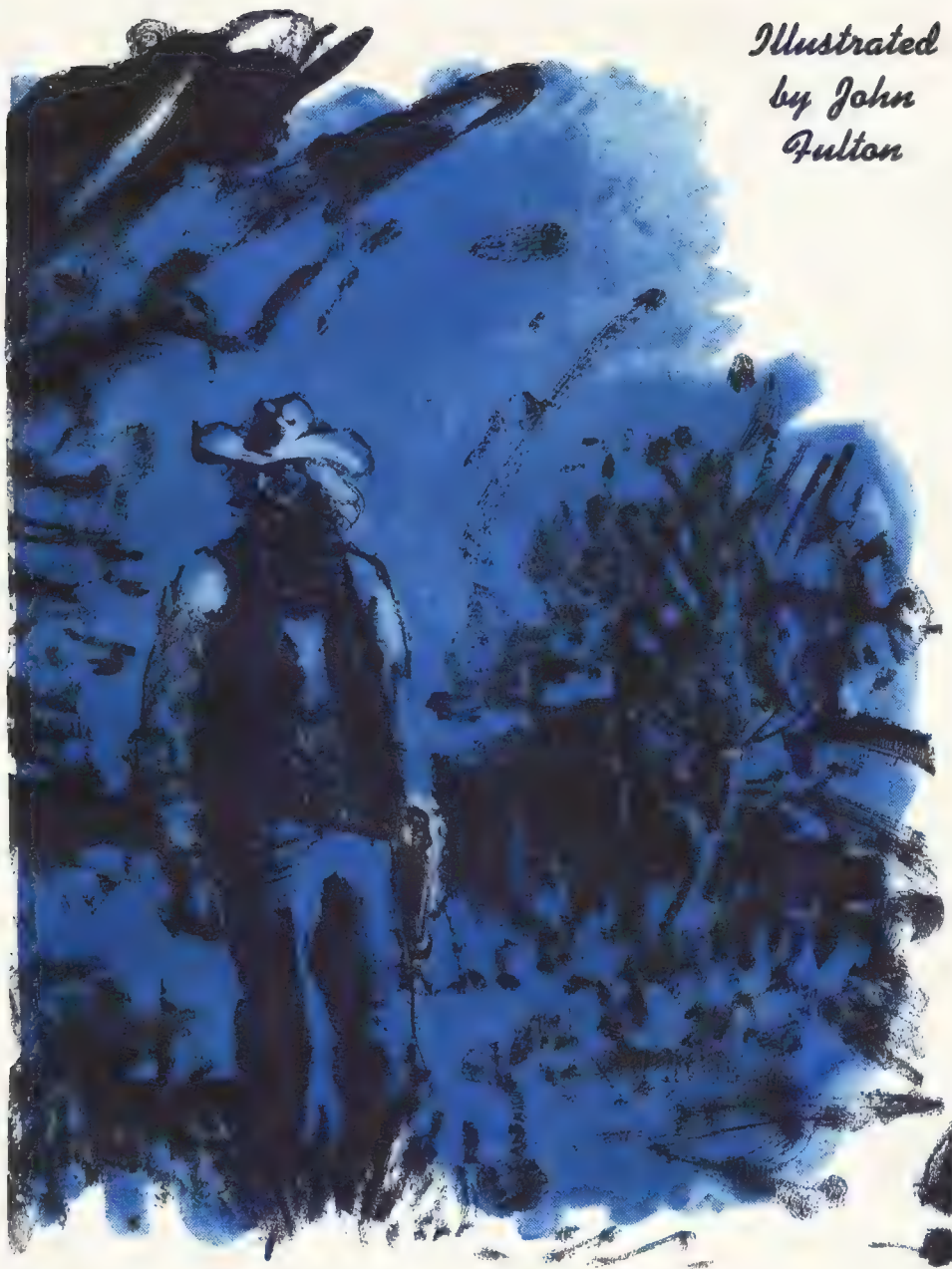
The keystone shifted, rocking outward. Stale air puffed about the edge; and then the stone was free, falling outward, even as Snake River leaped aside. Dust sprang up, almost invisible in the darkness.

Snake River broke small sticks of wood for torches, lighting them with a scratched match, and then bent forward to examine the small cave he had discovered.

They were there; he could see them ten feet back, and he shivered with excitement. There were two bags, leather green and rotted now, metal corroded. He bent and crawled inward, walking at a crouch, once he was fully inside.

The cave was small, barely ten feet deep and five wide. The roof was less than four feet from the floor, and after a second, Snake River went on hands and knees for greater speed. The torch smoked, and his eyes stung, but he gave no heed, drawn by the mystery of what lay ahead.

He caught at the first bag, propping his torch in the sand of the cave's floor, using the spade to batter open the encrusted locks of the leather



*Illustrated
by John
Fulton*

bags. Leather tore softly; and then the bags were open.

"Keeripes!" Snake River breathed. He plunged his hands into the first bag, and when they came free, they clutched flat pads of money. They smelled musty and old. Snake River laid them aside, lifting out the small leather bags, breaking the drawstrings easily and letting the coins fall onto the sandy floor. Gold they were, shiny and bright as though newly minted.

Snake River examined everything, riffling through the two ledgers, and then leaning back against the wall, thoughtfulness on his face. The first thrill was gone now, and wry laughter touched his mouth.

It was then that a voice spoke from the cave mouth.

"Don't move," the voice said, and the head and shoulders of the vulpine-faced gunman came into the cave.

A gun was in the man's right hand, and light glittered yellowly in his eyes from the torch's flare. Elation touched the face, cupidity tightening the too-small mouth. "So you found it!" he finished eagerly.

Snake River nodded, feeling the tenseness rushing into his hands, conscious of the gaping weapon facing him.

"It's there," he said. "Better than one hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

The gun wavered, as the gunman sighed. "I knew it," he said. "I knew Crazy Pete had something."

"He did," Snake River said and shifted imperceptibly, throwing his weight back on his bootheels. "If you hadn't gone gun-crazy, he might be alive today." His tone was hard. "I suppose you're Daniels."

"To hell with him!" the man said. "And I'm Daniels. I was just a kid

when this dough disappeared. My Dad shot it out with Crazy Pete, trying to get it then. He got killed and Pete lost his brains. I've waited a long time for this." His voice changed. "All right, Mis—"

Snake River hurtled to one side, going for his gun.

He heard the roar of Daniels' shot, felt the pushing slug hammer at the money-bag which partially shielded him. And then the Colt was in his hand, and he was triggering with the speed and delicacy which was second nature to him.

He shot three times, instinctively and accurately, and heard the slugs smashing home in the gunman's head and shoulders. Then there was silence, deadly silence, the rocking blasts of shooting deafening him for the moment.

He came to his knees and saw that Daniels was dead. He was shaking with reaction then, and he sat for a moment before holstering his gun. Then he crawled to the entrance of the cave and dragged the body in. The torch was guttering low, barely giving light now, and it flickered out in a burst of sparks, as he caught up the two bags of gold-pieces and edged past Daniels and out of the cave.

He stood, brushing sand from his trousers, and then went without a backward glance toward the team and rig. He was breathing hard, as though the fight had been a physical one. He had killed men before, but never had action been so swift and unpremeditated.

He sat for a moment in the buggy seat, the heavy leather bags of gold-pieces at his side, looking back through the night at where the cave must be. Men could come after Daniels later, after a report had been made to Tom Weatherby.

He thought of the wealth which had lain hidden for so long a time, stained by dampness, but with printing still clear. He thought of a hundred things, and soft laughter touched his throat. He cocked his feet upon the kickboard and swung the team back toward the road.

"Gee, hup!" he said, and the rig's wheels grated on the stony land.

ONCE on the road, he let the team out. Night was fully fallen, and he felt the urge to hurry. The gold chattered in the bags, and he whistled a bit, seeing the lights of Cherokee gradually growing closer.

It was late, almost midnight, when Snake River pulled the team to a halt before Tom Weatherby's home. Lights were in the window, and the door came open, as he went up the short walk. He grinned at Tom Weatherby's worried face, and went past him, going directly to the kitchen where Grace Weatherby waited.

Codley grinned and waved the gun. "Let's have the map, Grandpa."

"Well, man, well, what did you find?" Tom Weatherby asked at his back.

Snake River dropped the bags on the table, liking the solid sound they made on striking. One tilted and gold double-eagles spilled in a rich flood that reached almost to the table edge.

"It was there," Snake River said. "I left it all there, but this!"

"Good heavens!" Grace Weatherby whispered, and touched a single coin with a gentle finger.

"How much?" Tom Weatherby asked hoarsely.

"Over one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, I judged," Snake River said then. "But you see—"

"Up!" Codley said from the rear door. "Don't be foolish."

He came in then, a gun rock-steady in his right hand; and slipping in behind him was Bart Sansom, smiling slightly, eyes riveted on the gold bags on the table.

"A hundred and fifty thousand!" Bart Sansom said harshly. "That's a lot of money."

"Get out," Tom Weatherby said to Codley. "Get out before I kill you."

The gunman laughed. He laughed through stained teeth, and he was blocky and brutal in his assurance.

"We'll take the gold," he said. "We'll take it and instructions as to where the rest is hidden."

"You killed Dad," Tom Weatherby said, and took a single step toward Codley.

"Tom, no!" Grace Weatherby said, and caught at her husband's arm.

Bart Sansom came forward, keeping out of the line of fire. "We've waited half the night," he said to Snake River. "Daniels went after you, and we watched Weatherby. Daniels must have missed you."

Snake River Jim smiled then, without humor and without warmth. He was tense, and the coldness in his eyes made them frostily cloudy.

"Daniels missed," he said softly.

Bart Sansom's face tightened. "And you didn't?" he asked.

"I didn't," Snake River agreed.

Codley grinned. "That's one less in the cut, Bart," he said and waved the gun. "Let's have the map, Grandpa."

"In the back," Tom Weatherby said, possessed of a single thought. "You shot him in the back."

"To hell with that!" Codley snapped. "He shot first."

"Yeah, I heard," Tom Weatherby said, and came driving in.



Codley's gun jammed a single slug at Weatherby, and then the weapon was slapped aside, and Weatherby had the gunman in his hands.

They were powerful hands, and the muscles behind them were corded and tough and strong. But Codley was sturdy, too, and he braced himself and met the attack, slashing with brutal fists; in a moment gouting blood was smearing Tom Weatherby's face and mouth.

"Tom!" Grace Weatherby cried and would have gone to her husband's aid,

but Snake River caught and held her arm.

Weatherby fought with long slogging blows, driving forward, crowding Codley. He was heavy and vengeful, and his rocking gasps were loud in the room. Their bodies struck the stove, and soot showered from a shattered stovepipe. Codley grunted with pain and savaged Weatherby.

Weatherby groaned in agony and rolled free. But even as he twisted and came up, he brought Codley with him, locking both arms beneath Cod-



ley's, clasping strained hands on the gunman's burly neck. He stood rock-hard then, straining, surging every atom of his power into the hold.

Codley screamed, clawing with futile hands. His mouth gaped, and fear muddled his eyes. He made one final surge to break free, and Weatherby matched and overpowered the effort. Bone broke with a brittle popping sound, and then Codley was dead, his neck broken, head going sideways.

Tom Weatherby let the man drop, standing over him, sweat and blood

running down his battered face. He breathed in sucking gasps, and looked at the broken man at his feet.

"He'll murder nobody else," he said simply.

Snake River had his gun out then, close to Bart Sansom, and his voice was strangely calm.

"It's my play now, Sansom," he said.

The banker looked around, and for a moment his face did not change expression. Then he shook his head, and the calmness of his tone matched the showman's.

"Not yet," he said, and showed the .44 derringer in his hand.

The muzzle gaped at Grace Weatherby, gaped and held her in thrall. She was at her husband's side, and the gun menaced her as much as Snake River's threatened the banker.

"Impasse!" Bart Sansom said. "You can't kill me quick enough to keep me from shooting the woman."

Tom Weatherby took a slow step forward, then hesitated, seeing the whiteness of Sansom's finger on the trigger.

The banker shook his head. "Don't try it," he warned.

"Get out," Snake River said, and the banker made no move.

"I've got to have it," Sansom said. "Believe me, I've got to have it."

Snake River Jim understood then; he understood, for he was crooked and he could read another tin-horn's mind.

"The bank," he said, "your bank's short."

Perspiration slid onto Bart Sansom's face. "Fifty thousand," he said. "Fifty thousand dollars that I haven't got." His eyes went from face to face in desperation, the gun still steady in his hand. "I was with Crazy Pete when he got his memory back. I thought he was just drunk and didn't pay much attention when he drew the map. Then I realized he wasn't crazy; I realized he knew what he was talking about."

"You dirty butcher!" Tom Weatherby said then.

"No!" Sansom shook his head. "I didn't order any shooting. Codley and Daniels were to follow him and report back. There was a shoot-out; Pete watched his backtrail. That's the truth, so help me."

Snake River nodded. "And now you need to cover what you've stolen."

"Yes, that's it, that's it," Sansom said.

"We'll make a deal," Snake River said. "You heard me tell Tom that I left the rest of the money there. I'll give you the map and you can get it. But there's to be no more shooting."

"No!" Tom Weatherby said. "By God, I won't—"

"You swear you'll not trick me?" Bart Sansom said.

Snake River nodded. "It's there, along with Daniels. I don't say we won't come after it, after you get it. But I'll guarantee nobody'll beat you to it."

"It's a deal."

Snake River nodded at the table. "We'll keep this," he said, and fumbled for the map. "The money's in a small cave; you can't miss it, for I had to dig."

Sansom backed away, clutching the map. He glanced at it, and knowledge came to his eyes. "I recognize the place," he said.

"Then get going," Snake River said coldly. "Come back, and there will be shooting."

Then Bart Sansom was gone. He backed through the door and his feet made pounding echoes around the house.

"You fool, you utter damned fool!" Tom Weatherby cried and lunged toward the door.

THEN a horse made running sounds in the night, and Bart Sansom was truly gone. Snake River holstered his gun, and tiredness was in his body as he sank to a chair.

"Take it easy, Tom," he said. "There's nothing you can do now but notify the Sheriff about Codley here. You'll be in the clear, what with my story of how your Dad was killed." He smiled grimly. "We won't mention the money."

"Why?" Tom Weatherby asked, standing indecisively at the doorway. "Why'd you do it?"

Snake River sighed and fumbled for a cheroot. He lit it and blew soft gray smoke. "There's been enough killing," he said. "Three men died for that money in the last twenty-four hours. That's plenty." He gestured at the gold on the table. "There's three or four thousand dollars there," he finished, "and that's enough for you to open your own store."

"But—" Grace Weatherby began, and then cried softly, held tightly in her husband's arm. "I'm glad," she

said to Tom Weatherby then, "that the boys weren't here to see you kill that man."

"They'll hear about it," Tom Weatherby said bleakly.

Snake River Jim said nothing, only watched. Now that quiet had come he was beginning to feel his years. Still things had solved themselves fairly well. Tom Weatherby had avenged his father, and Bart Sansom—

"But Sansom's getting away!" Tom Weatherby said savagely.

Snake River grinned. "He'll be around," he said complacently. "He'll be around for his trial; and I—" He blew rich smoke thoughtfully. "Will do a rushing business with my Elixir of Life among the people who ride in to hear Sansom sent to prison."

"But the money, the hundred and fifty thousand!" Tom Weatherby said. "He'll replace what he's stolen!"

Snake River Jim laughed then, laughed long and full, forgetting the death which had come to him in the past day. The irony of the situation touched his sense of humor, and he laughed until tears stood in his eyes.

"You didn't think, I didn't think, nobody thought!" he said at last. "Twenty years brings a lot of changes, in money as well as people. That fortune which your father hid isn't worth the paper it's printed on!"

"A Confederate bank!" Grace Weatherby said, supplying the answer.

"Confederate money!" Snake River said. "That gold is the only thing of any value in the hoard."

And then the three of them were laughing in the tiny kitchen, laughing at the mockery of fate. And Snake River Jim's laughter was the greatest of all; for somehow, the future looked brighter than it had in years.

He preened his mustache, and if such a thing was possible, he swaggared as he sat in the kitchen chair.

A Question of Measures

MAN has divided everything imaginable into standard quantities: Time, all our commodities, the earth and even the very heavens. Here are ten questions concerning measures. Seven correctly answered is good; eight or more excellent.

1. What part of the body gives us a unit used in measuring height of horses? A small amount of liquor?

2. What American author took a pseudonym from a phrase used in measuring depth of water?

3. What Western city has a nickname that includes a measure?

4. What common expression, mentioning a measure, is derived from a

by **Kennie MacDowd**

usury fee that *Shylock* demanded of *Antonio*?

5. What is the only gem whose weight is not measured by the carat?

6. What, according to the Bible, will not add one cubit to one's stature?

7. If cloth is measured by the yard, by what are lines of poetry measured?

8. A theodolite is a measuring instrument used by what profession?

9. If you were reading a 72-point type headline, how high would the letters be?

10. What Italian physicist gave his

name to the unit by which we measure electromotive force?

Answers

10. Alessandro Volta.
9. One inch
8. Surveying
7. By the foot.
6. Taking thought.
5. Pearl
4. To claim one's pound of flesh
3. Denver "The Mile-High City"
2. Mark Twain
1. (a) Hand (b) Finger



Guardian *of the* Flock

A gallant gray warrior defends his family against heavy odds.

by JIM CHAPMAN

THE big gander studied the jagged crags along the river gorge, searching for his enemy. He muttered querulously, and limped back and forth on the bar of sand, fretting, like a general before the attack.

The gander's family of seven stood a little aside from the rest, long black necks craning watchfully above their gray bodies. They were honkers, the largest form of Canada goose, and they towered above the lesser geese like turkeys in a flock of domestic chicken. The fifty lesser birds stirred nervously, watching every move of Honker, for he was the acknowledged leader of all the flocks in that part of the Red Deer River gorge.

The shadows of evening deepened, and the last rays of the sun slanted down through the crags, like beams of gold. The air began to cool, and Honker knew it was time to move. In the grainfields above the gorge there was food which they must have before night. But still he hesitated. The lesser Canadas gabbled restlessly.

Another flock of geese rose a mile away down the river. They flew along the gorge, then turned up between the banks of a coulee, and their cries were suddenly muted. Another flock followed, then a third. A raft of mallards splashed off the water and winnowed past. They climbed higher, laboring to lift their bodies above the high banks. Honker watched them

go, expecting the winged killer to strike, but the mallards escaped without interruption.

At last Honker limped into the water and swam slowly away from the bar. The flock muttered excitedly and followed. His mate came to his side, and he spoke to her, taking comfort in her nearness. Their marriage, like that of all Canada geese, was for life. They were a team, each knowing the other's moods and desires.

He rose into the wind, and the flock beat their way off the water, the roar of their voices echoing in the narrow cañon. Honker's mate flew on his right, with the six young in line behind. The lesser Canadas, chattering giddily, made up the rest of the flock.

The big gander watched the sky, fearing the attack which still might come. And suddenly he saw the golden eagle come into sight above the sandstone crags, fold his wings and plunge toward them.

Honker cried out a warning and dived, leading the flock downward to safety. He knew the eagle; twice during the summer it had struck into the ranks of his own little family, taking a gosling each time. During both attacks Honker had fought the killer, but against the huge talons and massive tearing bill he had been almost powerless.

Now the flock's descent was too slow as compared to the eagle's bulletlike speed. He loomed above them, a great ugly projectile, hurtling down through the placid evening sky.

Honker saw an old goose, one which had been injured almost a year before by a hunter's gun, trail behind the others. The eagle struck her with his huge talons, and there was a sickening thud. The killer and his victim fell together for a few seconds; then the eagle spread his wings and carried the limp body toward a jutting crag on the river bank.

Three hundred feet below, Honker brought the flock out of its dive. He reorganized the ranks and flew down the gorge, climbing once more toward the rim.

One of the lesser ganders cried out. He swung away from the flock and circled back, searching for the goose which had been his mate. But his loved one, the only true companion he would ever have, was silent. The gander swung above the feasting eagle, honking mournfully.

The eagle's mate appeared above the bereaved gander. She watched him for a moment as though puzzled by his actions, then dived.

Honker meanwhile led the survivors toward the grainfields. He swung up a coulee, and soon was near where they habitually fed.

CRAIG WILSON, collector for a Chicago museum, rested his field-glasses on the steering-wheel of his car and looked questioningly at his companion.

"That big goose and his family have come every day yet!" vowed big Kanute Jensen. He shifted his heavy body and dug mechanically in the bib of his blue denim overalls for his box of snoose. Then he stuck his puzzled face out of the window and watched a small flock of Canada geese alighting with the others half a mile away.

Wilson produced his pipe and fished in the pocket of his tan-colored breeches for tobacco. Almost at once he laid them in his lap and raised the glasses. Another flock had cleared the banks of the Red Deer River.



Behind him Honker heard the solid sound of

"There he comes," exclaimed Wilson. "Eight gray geese are leading that flock, and the biggest one's a whopper. He's just what I'm looking for!"

"Yep!" exclaimed Jensen enthusiastically. "That is him!" He tapped the snoose-box, took his chew, and tucked the container back into his overall pocket. "Like I said," he added, "he comes every morning and night to feed on this field."

The new flock didn't settle with the other geese, but instead turned into the wind two hundred yards beyond them. The new arrivals dropped eagerly, their broad wings fanning the air as they let their heavy bodies into the stubble.

"That big gander," said Jensen curiously, "he weighs how much? Ten pounds, maybe?"

Wilson uttered a sound which was very near a snort. He watched the huge bird for a moment longer, then lowered his glasses. There was a glitter of excitement in his cold gray eyes when he looked at Jensen. "The biggest honker on record weighed twenty-two pounds. I'll bet my bottom dollar that that one won't weigh much less!"

"Well, by gum!" exclaimed Jensen, and he looked with new respect toward where the big gander and his family showed large in the stubble.

At last Wilson put his glasses in their case. "I'd better kill him as soon as I can, and take no chances on someone else getting him," he said.

"Kill him!" exclaimed the Swede. "I thought you wanted him alive!"

Wilson shook his head. "We've no use for live stuff now," he explained. "It's stuffed specimens for exhibits that we want, and the bigger the better. I'll bet the Curator will be tickled when I show him the measurements of this gander's skin!"

Half an hour later Kanute Jensen climbed out of the car at the door of his farmhouse. Wilson also got out to stretch his legs. His long lean form rose higher than the big Swede.

"It's settled, then," said Wilson. "I'll pick up you and your goose-decoys tomorrow morning, and we'll dig a pit in that field where he comes to feed."

"Yep," replied Jensen with a sigh, "we will try, but I don't think you will find killing him easy. Perhaps you will soon feel like Horace Jalbert."

"Who?" asked Wilson, puzzled.



pellets striking his mate. She cried out in pain; and the old gander's heart filled with a terrible fear.

Jensen looked uncomfortable, and plainly wished that he hadn't mentioned the man. "I don't want trouble," he said. "He is my neighbor, and we get along pretty good."

"Poacher, is he?" asked Wilson with a chuckle. "Well, I'm not a warden or anything. But how's he mixed up in this?"

The Swede looked at the ground in confusion. "Well, I guess that he is a poacher," he admitted. "He has hunted that gander for two years and cannot get him. People laugh at him!"

"Hmml!" exclaimed the collector thoughtfully. And then he grinned. "Well, there can always be a first time, but I've never gone after a specimen of any kind that I didn't manage to kill, eventually."

IN dusk of early morning Honker's flock stirred and gabbled. They were hungry. Darkness had come too quickly the night before, and they'd been forced to return to the river before their crops were filled.

The sun was still below the horizon when the old gander led his flock toward the fields. Their blatant cries were harsh in the silent gorge.

Honker flew high when he reached the coulees. There was always the poacher, with his rusty open-bored scattergun, to fear. The old gander guessed wisely, because it so happened that the man had chosen this morning for another try at the flock.

The gander saw the unshaven poacher crouched behind a boulder on the coulee bank. Honker veered away, but he wasn't afraid, because even the closest goose was well out of range. But today the light glinted on the blued steel barrel of a new shotgun!

It bellowed three times, rapidly, and the explosions were loud. Pellets whistled around the old honker's head. One pellet clicked through his wing feathers, and another nicked his webbed foot and stung like fire. He knew the feel of shot. Once five years before, one of his black legs had been broken by buckshot. The leg had knitted, leaving an ugly lump two inches above his foot, and giving him a limp.

Behind him he heard the solid sound of pellets striking his mate. She cried out in pain, and he turned. Her wingbeats were labored. The old gander's heart filled with a ter-

rible fear. But the goose flew on, and Honker knew that she could not have been fatally hit. A badly wounded goose always returns to the water.

Then he saw the gap in the line, and his heart was sad. One of their young, the bird which was next to his mate, had fallen. He saw its body crash limply into the scrub in the coulee bottom.

THE old gander honked sadly as he swung over the edge of the stubble field. He turned toward a small flock which was already there. On the way he babbled sympathetically to his mate. A hundred yards separated them from the strangers when Honker and his flock began to glide.

It was then that the gander became suspicious. For some reason the strange geese looked stiff and afraid. He noticed with misgiving that the stubble had been disturbed in their midst. Suddenly he imagined that something moved, and he veered away, crying out a warning to the others. The tail end of the flock swung close as they turned, but nothing happened. Still the old gander was suspicious because the strange flock had remained silent.

He circled the field nervously and settled about three hundred yards up the stubble. His long neck stretched up, and he stared distrustfully. But soon he went tenderly to his mate.

She was plucking the bloody feathers from around a dark spot on her breast. Here one of the pellets had entered and was giving her great pain. He whispered to the goose and caressed her neck with his bill.

For the next half-hour the gander stood guard. He was deeply concerned, because he'd seen many geese die a lingering death from similar gunshot wounds.

THREE hundred yards away, in the pit among the decoys, Wilson and Kanute Jensen were discussing the situation.

"I think we are out of luck," whispered Jensen. "Now I remember. Other flocks sometimes settle with him, but he *never* settles with other geese. I have watched him now for nearly three years."

"Not so dumb!" admitted Wilson. "That way he never takes a chance on decoys." He raised his glasses and studied the feeding flock. "It looks as though that Jalbert fellow hit the old boy's mate, as well as killing one of the young," he whispered. "She's got a wound on her breast."

Jensen clicked his tongue. "He's always hurting things," he said. "Me and the Missus don't like it." The Swede looked thoughtful. "And he must have a new gun. He shot fast."

"Sounded like an automatic," said Wilson.

For a time there was silence, except for the gabble of the distant geese. Then Jensen spoke again.

"What will you do now?"

"I guess it means the coulees for me," replied the collector. "I'll have to play the same game as Jalbert, except that I'll be there all the time. Sooner or later that gander will make a mistake. They all do."

"Maybe," said Jensen dubiously. Then he observed: "But maybe you could get him on a windy day when he has to fly low."

"Listen!" interrupted the collector. "There's another flock coming. We'll see if we can get one or two, because my permit calls for five lesser Canadas, as well as two honkers." . . .

The old gander saw the new flock approaching from the river, but he paid little attention. He was in the act of gulping down his first head of wheat when a gun thundered. Honker leaped up and uttered a warning honk to his charges. Hurriedly they left the dangerous field, and finished their breakfast five miles away.

That evening they made the long flight back to the same distant field, and returned to it every feeding-time thereafter.

The long flight was tiring for his mate, and this troubled the old gander. She seemed to be recovering from the wound, but he often glanced back and found her several feet behind, laboring bravely to regain her place in the line.

Honker shifted their resting-place on the river, hoping to avoid the eagle, but he followed and once more became a menace. The killer seemed to have developed an insatiable appetite for gooseflesh. The next morning as they were returning from the fields, a lesser Canada goose was struck from the tail end of the flock.

Honker found himself between his two most dreaded enemies. If he flew low to escape the eagle, the poacher might be waiting. Yet the man appeared less dangerous, because the eagle trailed them so relentlessly.

Wilson worked hard at outwitting the big gander. Every dawn found him waiting in the coulees or along the rim of the gorge. If he saw the honker's flock pass a certain place, the next feeding-time found him at it, waiting. He took great pains to keep out of sight, for he had no intention that the wary old gander should become alarmed.

It had been Wilson's observation that most geese followed a similar route when going to feed, but this gander was different. On some occasions Wilson watched him lead the flock back and forth in the gorge, gaining sufficient height to clear the high banks. At other times he simply flew high above a coulee. It seemed as though the gander was lucky; but day after day he did something new. Soon the man realized that it was cunning he faced, not luck. He redoubled his efforts, patiently analyzing the gander's every move.

"Time and fortune changeth all things," Wilson quoted to Jensen one day when he was passing. "Persistence always pays off in the end."

Craig Wilson reveled in the perfect September days and made good use of his extra time by studying the fauna of the region. He had a scientist's curiosity, and poked into every nook and cranny.

In one barren sandstone gulch he found a small waterwashed cave and dug for relics. His reward consisted of two tiny arrowheads and a triangular stone knife of Paleolithic times. The hours passed quickly, and only the dimming light in the cave reminded him that it was growing late. He hurried out of the gulch, and discovered that the geese had already gone out to feed. It was the only time that he failed.

His first warning of the storm came the next day. Black clouds appeared in the northwest at noon, and the air took on an icy chill. By mid-afternoon the skies were hidden in

dullness. The geese fed early, as is their custom in dull weather. Even when they flew out to the fields, the breeze was strong enough to hinder their progress. Craig Wilson knew that his chance was at hand.

During the night it began to storm.

Dawn found the man crouched in a patch of buck-brush near the mouth of the deepest coulee. He was clad in his parka and heavy hunting-clothes. The wind howled and tugged at him, as though resenting this creature which refused to take shelter. It roared down the coulee in terrific gusts, whipping the bushes and lifting little whirls of dust from the rocky hill-sides. Sooner or later he felt sure that the geese would fly up this tributary gorge on their way out to feed.

His judgment proved to be correct. Twice during the early morning he saw geese attempt to enter the coulee mouth, only to be driven back by the force of the wind. At noon he ate the cold lunch he had brought, and longed for a hot cup of coffee. But he refused to abandon his vigil.

It grew colder, and flakes of snow were whipped against his parka by the gale. For the first time that fall the northern prairies were being given a taste of winter. Sand rose in clouds off the river bars, whirled in the gorge, then trailed away over the opposite banks.

The chill sank into him, and he risked a walk to the end of the coulee to get stiffness out of his limbs. Cautiously he peered down at the river, which was threshed to foam. The geese were huddled on the sand, heads under wings—all except the big honker. He was crouched, but his long black neck craned up, on guard as usual.

Wilson plodded back to the bend in the coulee where the buck-brush grew and again waited impatiently. His complete devotion to what he considered his duty was what counted in the end.

SLACKENING of the storm was scarcely noticeable when it began. First he became aware that the gusts had lost their savagery and that the roar above the coulee banks was not so loud. The clouds, which scudded like shrouded chariots in a race, began to break occasionally. He caught sight of the sinking sun, a veiled disk in the west.

Again Craig Wilson tried to get the stiffness out of his limbs. He didn't dare stand up, for fear that he might be seen by approaching geese. So he flexed his legs and arms. The test was near, but he felt confident. Things were in his favor. There was still enough wind to force the geese to fly up the coulee, and they would certainly try to feed because they had not eaten for over twenty-four hours. . . .



Then he saw them. They were higher than he expected; in fact, they were flying halfway to the rim, hugging the bank so as to keep out of the main force of the wind. It was the right flock. The gander was in the lead with his mate, and five surviving young in line. In spite of himself Wilson felt his muscles contract. There was a tightening in his chest. This was the end, the final act.

As they drew near, his eyes measured the distance at which they might pass above him. Forty yards, he guessed, possibly forty-five; nice shotgun range, in any event. It would be almost a certain kill.

Honker fought the wind, his huge body absorbing the shock of the buffeting air-currents, breaking a trail for those which followed. His mate flew in a semi-vacuum behind his right wing, and for this reason was able to keep her place. Honker was brought to a standstill by the current of air which poured around the bend in the coulee. Inch by inch he worked his way ahead.

The old gander didn't anticipate attack. The elements were too fierce. But there was no mistaking the form of the eagle when he suddenly plunged over the coulee bank. Already he was close.

Honker bugled the alarm and dived toward the bottom of the coulee. The flock followed, each bird striving to outdo the other and thus escape the killer which they had learned to dread.

As Honker dived he noticed movement in the bushes. A strange man in hunting-clothes was looking at him. His heart shrank with fear, but at that moment he saw something which caused him to forget everything else.

His mate, still weak from her wounds, had trailed behind. The eagle was close behind her. He saw terror in his loved one's eyes as she realized death was a moment away.

Then, in an effort to escape, she darted sidewise and attempted to settle on the steep coulee bank. Instead she lost her footing on the hillside, skidded, then tumbled head over heels down the slope. But this sudden maneuver saved her for the moment, because the eagle was unable to strike.

The goose came to a stop scarcely twenty yards from the buck-brush where the man was hiding. Instantly she ran toward the bushes for shelter, flapping her wings to gain speed.

THE eagle checked his dive and turned back. Again he plunged toward the goose, his great talons extended, and head hanging forward as he prepared to strike. Honker saw the triumphant flash in the killer's eyes as he dropped upon his mate.

Instantly the old gander flew at the eagle and fell upon him from above. He cried out to his mate as he flailed the eagle mercilessly with his powerful pinions, striking the eagle again and again. The blows sounded like dull rifle-shots. The eagle screamed, and his voice was torn away by the wind like other sounds of conflict.

Honker saw the eagle lose his balance and fall, at the same time releasing the goose. The killer rolled over on his back and reached up at the gander with grasping needle-sharp talons. He seemed to radiate hate, with his hooked bill wide open and neck-feathers ruffed out in rage.

The gander hovered in the air above him, black legs dangling and

long neck craning down. He continued to strike angrily, confused by his own anger and fear, and unable to grasp that the goose had escaped into the bushes.

Suddenly the eagle seized one of his dangling legs and jerked him out of the air!

Wilson gazed at the gander's black legs and blinked.

He watched with fascinated eyes while the courageous old fighter was pulled out of the air. Then he leaped to his feet and crashed from the bushes.

The eagle was taken completely by surprise and slackened his hold. The gander recovered his wits. He pulled himself free and leaped into the air, gazing about and crying to his mate.

Craig Wilson watched the goose scuttle out of the bushes and rise to meet him. Together they flew swiftly down the coulee, carried on the wind. Then the man faced the eagle, which was awkwardly flapping off the hillside. Deliberately Wilson raised the shotgun, and a moment later the killer of the gorge was only a limp heap upon the ground.

He didn't particularly need the specimen, but he skinned the eagle in the icy chill of the wind. He hurried to the car, and on the way to town called at Kanute Jensen's farm to say good-by.

"Did you get him?" asked Jensen after Wilson was soaking in heat near the kitchen range.

The collector shook his head and related the details. "When I saw that big lump on his leg, I knew he was no good for a specimen," he concluded.

Jensen grinned broadly. "I think it was more because he was brave that you let him live," he said; "I am glad!"

Illustrated by John Costigan, N. A.



BLUE BOOK will pay twenty-five dollars for each letter accepted by us for publication either in our "What Do You Think?" or "My Most Amusing Experience" department—which in this crowded Christmas issue we have here combined on one page. The author's full name and address must accompany the letters; but, if he prefers, initials only may be used for publication. No letters will be returned. All letters submitted will become the property of McCall Corporation. Address: "What Do You Think?" or "My Most Amusing Experience," Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York 17, N. Y.

Our Readers' Forum

America Is Worth Working For?

SUPPOSE someone had said to you during the war: "America isn't worth fighting for." What would have been your reaction? You don't need to answer. I know.

But suppose someone says: "America isn't worth working for." Would your reaction be as positive?

It should be, for anything that is worth fighting for—your country, your home, your family, your job—is surely worth working for.

Everybody worked to make America what it is. Wherever we went, we worked: building cabins in the wilderness and breaking raw sods for crops; building bridges and roads, schoolhouses, churches and barns. Irish, Swedes, English, Germans, French, Danes, Bohemians, Russians, no matter what country they came from, they joined us in working for America, for better homes, better schools for their children, more pleasure in living, higher rating as free citizens.

During the war we worked for victory. Free hands built Flying Fortresses and ships. Free hands ran our railroads and hauled the products of factories to ships. Free hands planted and plowed and harvested.

But now, what is this madness sweeping the country? Free Americans refuse to work for America unless they can have this, that, or the other thing

just as they want it. When have conditions been just what we wanted? And what justification is there for sympathy strikes, or for using force or threats for keeping men who want to work from doing so?

If free Americans who refuse to work were in Russia, they would have to work or suffer severe penalties for being absent even one day without a good excuse, for checking in late or knocking off early, for any idling.

America can never get back to her greatness unless she works as she used to work. What could we not have in this rich country of ours if we worked for it! As it is, we are sabotaging our war sacrifices and damaging our prestige abroad.

America is worth working for. All the blessings we have won through work can be preserved only by more work.

—L. S. M.

MY MOST AMUSING EXPERIENCE

After the Sermon

THIS incident embarrassed my wife until she cried over it, but it amused me immensely.

As pastor of the Morgan Park Congregational Church, Chicago, I was presiding at the annual business meeting of the church. At the proper time I called on my wife to read her report for the Ladies' Aid Society, of which she was president. The Flower Committee had done particularly well. So she said: "The Flower Committee has done excellent work. There have been flowers on the pulpit every Sunday, which were given to those who were sick after the sermon."

Amid the roar of laughter which followed one guy bawled out: "Were there enough to go round?"

W. B. Millard.

Every Confounded Room

ONE night at a hotel in Chicago I was awakened by a grating sound at my door. Someone was trying to fit a key into the lock. Rising from my bed I opened the door, and saw a stout red-faced gentleman who evidently had been indulging in strong drink.

"I beg your pardon, sir," apologized the man with a smile. "I thought this was my room,"—and showing me his key I saw it was the same number as mine, only on the floor above me.

I went back to bed and after a short interval someone again tried to fit a

key into the lock. When I opened the door, I found the same man there.

"Oh, I certainly beg your pardon," smiled the inebriated one again. "I thought this was my room."

Once more I went back to bed, and after a time I heard again the same noise at my door. A third time I opened the door, and again I saw before me the same large red-faced individual. But this time the man was in a rage.

"Look here," he stormed, "you got every confounded room in the house?"

Emil Schultz.

Encounter at Sea

IT was nearly dusk in the western Pacific and the *Iowa* had signaled our destroyer to come alongside for delivery of mail and dispatches. The battleship was carrying the admiral—and we hastened to execute the order.

When we drew close enough to throw a line over we could see several of the *Iowa's* crew lounging on the fo'castle and along the rail. Their appearance, as well as that of their ship, was quite a contrast to our "tin can." We felt somewhat disreputable when compared to the spic-and-span elegance towering above us.

"When are you Sunday-school guys going to sign up with the fightin' navy?" jeered one of our boys.

"Take that floating hotel back to Frisco" . . . "Bet you mugs wear lacy drawers" . . . Our men couldn't lay it on thick enough.

Until our mission was completed, that is. As the comparatively small destroyer picked up speed and drew away, a clear voice rang out after us: "Shove off, Coxswain! You've got your orders."

On our ship: dead silence.

Lt. (jg) Robert F. Welch.

We'd Met Before

MY husband was in an Army hospital; my brother was away at another Army camp; and we didn't see one another very often.

This particular Sunday evening, I had spent the whole day at Devens; the nurses had allowed me to stay with my husband until the late train. Entering the crowded car, I spied one empty seat halfway down the car, and made my way toward it, ignoring the admiring whistles of a group of inebriated soldiers.

I slumped down in the seat, and closed my weary eyes. Suddenly I opened them with a start as someone tapped my shoulder.

One of the young soldiers was holding onto the strap just above me.

"I'm not trying to be fresh, miss," he mumbled, "but I'm positive we've met before."

I glanced around, embarrassedly. Everyone in the car was watching. Then I burst out laughing.

"Of course we've met before," I exclaimed. "I'm your sister."

It was my kid brother, on a preëmbarkation binge.

—R. P.



Jackson Sells a Horse

HIS name was Andrew Jackson, and it was to be his fate all the years of his life that every time a woman got her fingers around his heart, she had to be already another man's. And that was the way with this first girl, who had the green ocean in her eyes and Ireland in her hair, as it was in his own, and a look as sweet and lazy as a breath of meadow wind.

The worst part of it was that she had stolen his purse at the hanging yesterday—she or this man she was with. And that served to mix up Andrew's emotions to a considerable extent as he jolted into Natchez on a farmer's wagon in the dusky drizzle to hunt them up. On top of his weary anger, he was cold and muddy and miserable, and about as lame, from his new boots, as his old cat-hammed mare that was tied on behind.

The farmer pulled into a vacant lot by a blacksmith shop. "Guess I'll jist night here, late as 'tis, an' do my dickerin' in the mawnin'," he announced. "If you're really headin' for the Gut, son, keep right on down this street an' you can't miss it. But I hate to see you go there. They don't think it's much of a night if'n at least one gambler or floater or fancy lady aint found in the river next day—or not found ever. Country boys, they get handled kind of rough sometimes."

Andrew didn't bother to explain that he was not a country boy, but full twenty-two years old and public prosecutor of Tennessee. He just said, "So I've heard," and got his long, lanky body down over the wheel that was covered solidly with mud right to the center, and the cold rain struck him afresh.

The farmer reached back to where he had potatoes and yams and whisky and pine tar and bottles of walnut dye, and an old bear-hide sewn up full of potash. He came up with a speckled apple and said: "Enjoy that for me, son, for catchin' me up on the news."

Andrew's feet, already swollen and hot from walking in the boots before he'd been picked up, now ached clear into his shoulders as he hobbled down the oozing street with the mare that had lamed on him at noon.

All but barefoot from his campaign with the Tennessee militia, he had traded his watch for the boots and some money to Captain Scott, who was being hauled back home—what was left of him—in a supply wagon. Andrew wished *he* was being hauled back there, and that he had never seen that green-eyed hussy who coz-

ened him. She had come out with the crowd yesterday from Natchez when word got around that the Tennessee and Mississippi men had caught Charley Owens, the half-Creek, who had lit the war-pipe in Alabama, and that they were going to give him a trial and hang him.

Then, when it was over, Andrew's purse was gone, along with this girl who had been telling him how much courage she imagined it must take to drag lawless men into the Tennessee courts and convict them. And she asked him prettily if he would see her through the crowd to Mr. Hulett, her escort.

Hulett turned out to be a small, withy man. He had pale eyes set wide from a thin nose; and a white scar ran from thin lips to left ear, from which the lobe was gone, and down the side of his neck till it disappeared under his collar. He also had a red-wheeled rig and a pair of beautiful claybanks with black manes and tails—and, even more to Andrew's taste, he had Mistress Anne, as he referred to the green-eyed girl when thanking Andrew for seeing after her.

THEY had been gone several hours when Andrew discovered that his purse was also missing. He remembered, then how Mistress Anne and Hulett both had jostled him so much in the crowd. But she was on the side where he carried the purse.

His thirty-day enlistment was already three days over, and he told Captain Scott, pillowed pale and weak on a saddle under the ministering hands of General Kincannon, that he was going to catch some sleep and head for Natchez on a private matter. He and Mistress Anne had bumped into the General two or three times this afternoon, and now he received a speculative look from that gentleman, who was commander of the Southern Department, with headquarters in Natchez, and the only man on the field in uniform except for an aide.

Captain Scott had lived in Natchez too, and he said: "Andy, that Hulett is bad medicine. He's a cutthroat—literally—and a horsethief; and though they make a secret of it, she's his wife—"

Andrew had been born with a chip on his shoulder. Stiffly, he said: "Sir, I'll—"

The General made a wide gesture. "I'm sure Mr. Jackson knows what he's about, Captain. Sir,"—he looked at Andrew,—"*I'd like to discuss a matter privately with you.*" . . .

And so it was that Andrew had the letter, heavily sealed with wax, in a packet inside his shirt as he led the mare through the rainy dusk. His pigtail of hair, done up in an eel-skin, was clammy on his neck, and his outer coat was wet through on the back.

But he had his powder and wadding and pistols, loaded with three balls each, under his inner coat; and they were dry—he hoped. It was to Hulett he was going to look for his money—including enough to pay for his trip and trouble—since he couldn't even quarrel with the girl, much less shoot her. And it might take six bullets to make the man see things in a reasonable light, time it was over.

In spite of the weather, a heap of people moved in and out of the lighted stores and saloons, and fiddle music came from the hurdy-gurdies. Wagons and rigs splattered along or stood in the gutters, and fine carriages with coachmen huddling in the seats were before the Natchez House. Inside, under sparkling chandeliers, ladies and gentlemen were served at snowy tables by starched Negroes. It was a sight to make you catch your breath: all the splendor. Andrew halted a moment; and at one side in there, in black suit and boiled shirt, he saw General Kincannon eating in bachelor loneliness.

That reminded him of the sealed packet, and he went on. With the letter, the General had given him half of a dollar bill—a common enough scrap of money in a land drained of silver by the Eastern banks—and he was to hand it to the proprietor of Floto's inn, in the Gut, for his supper and lodging. Whoever later presented both halves of the bill to Andrew was to be given the letter.

"Don't discuss the matter with Floto at all," Kincannon had warned. "If no one gets in touch with you by morning, return the letters to me. Either way, I'll give you ten pound for your trouble, and then you'll be free to—uh—visit with this—uh—young lady." Andrew's heart had beat fast at that, for ten pound was more than he had made his whole year of risking his life, bringing law and order to Tennessee.

Then the General unpursed his bearded lips and said: "I—uh—should not be wonderfully surprised if you run into Hulett at Floto's. He's had a room there since he shot the owner of the Natchez House and had to move out."

In his heart, Andrew knew that the letter meant war with the Spaniards, and he reckoned complacently that he, being in on the ground floor, would get at least a lieutenant's commission to help drive the dogs out of New Orleans into the gulf, where they belonged. Time somebody else held

the mouth of the river awhile—high time.

He almost forgot the torturing boots as the road dropped over the hill and he gained his first look at Natchez-under-the-Bluff: Buildings lay sodden under the low-hung smoke. Warehouses, reeking of tar and turpentine and tobacco. Taverns, stables, hurdy-gurdies. And beyond, on the river that stretched out of sight into the dusk, were hundred-foot lumber rafts, with fires on deck, and Kentucky broadhorns. A woman was milking a cow in a pen on one. Keels, and a galley with thirty oars and more. The New Orleans express, it would be.

The music was thicker and faster here. He heard a shot as he slogged on down, eye peeled for Floto's inn, but it was evidently all in fun, for a woman laughed. Heavy boots shuffled somewhere, and a man chanted: "Prance around the gal with the pink petticoat; she come down on the Kaintuck boat—" And a man cried, farther away: "Take your dirty hands off'n her, damn you!"

It took him twenty minutes to find Floto's—a sprawling two-story place with a one-story ell, and a squat, aproned man lounging in the doorway, jaws working in stolid rhythm. He didn't offer to take the mare.

Bone-tired and shivering, sudden irritation boiled within Andrew.

"Your hostlers all dead here?" he demanded.

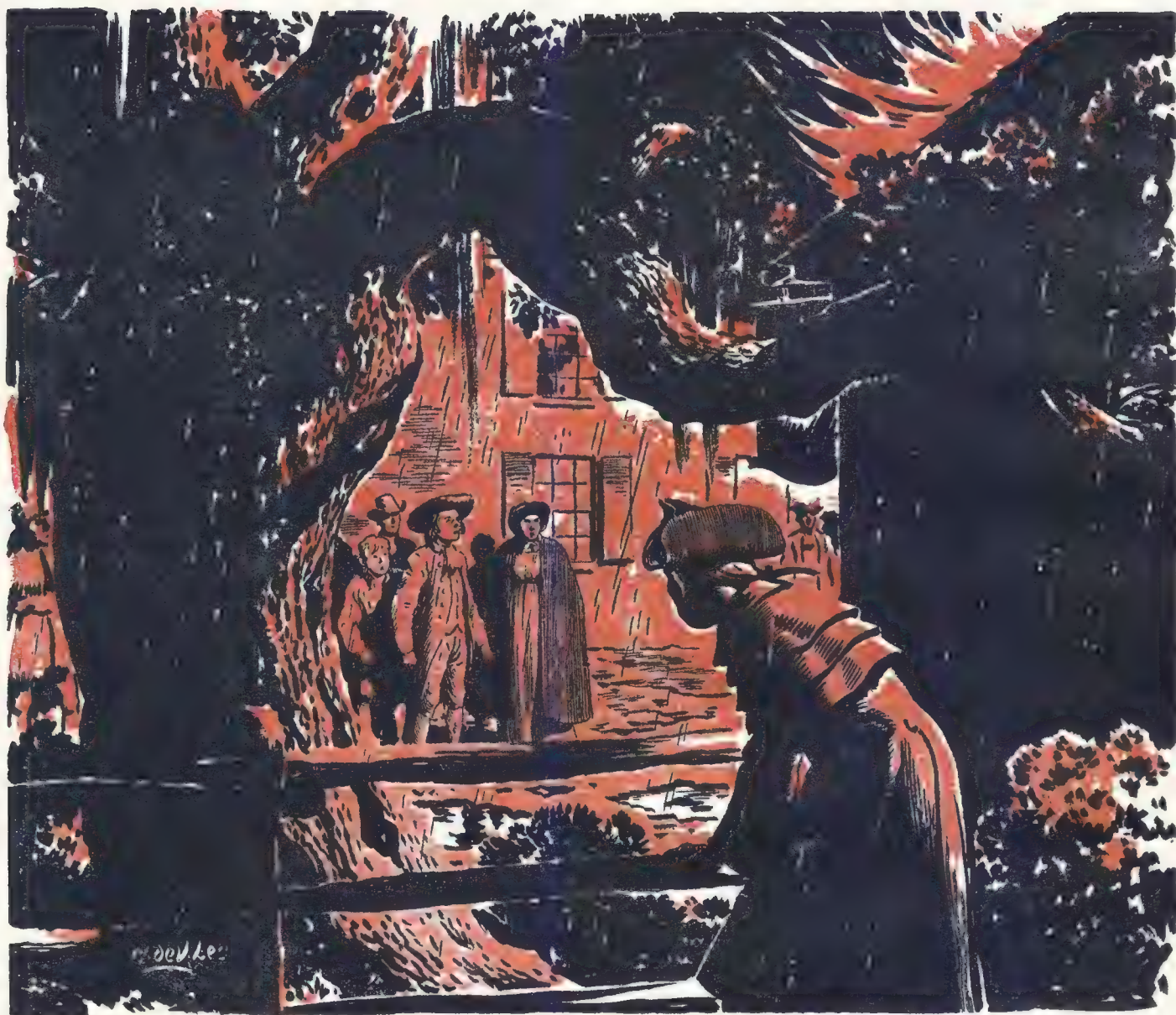
Well, after he got to be a senator and a major-general and had whipped the British at New Orleans and become President of the country and such, it occurred to him that maybe he didn't present such a commanding figure that day. At any rate, the tavern-keeper only spat into the running street and jerked a thumb toward a little alley.

"Got no 'ostler," he said cheerfully, "an' I can't slosh around or I'll get the vapors. Barn's out back."

BY the fire his clothes steamed, and his hair, combed and dry, curled on his shoulders, but his feet hurt worse than ever as the heat reached them. Floto had pocketed the half of the dollar bill with even less than half a glance, and gone about setting the table for two. Peas boiled on the lug-pole, and the sour cornbread could be smelled clear to Chattanooga, Andrew reckoned; but he was hungry and he didn't wait for second call when the stuff was dished.

"To the victor belong the spoils," seems to have been his maxim long before he achieved the Presidency.

by EVERETT M. WEBBER



The front half of the roof was ablaze as Andrew neared the back door. But most of the people stood back watching.

Filling his bowl, he had half a notion to get up and move his coat away from the fire, the smell of the walnut dye in it was so strong—and in that second it came to him how he was going to get his money out of Hulett. The man's claybanks were in the barn and the red-wheeled rig in the lot, but he had seen neither hide nor hair of him and Mistress Anne.

Floto squinched his blood-veined eyes and said: "You say grace, Mister?" and then a man called downstairs: "Floto? We'll eat with you tonight." It was Hulett. Andrew felt his pulse quickening. Then a tapping on a door up there, and: "Anne? Are you ready?"

Floto growled, "Damn!" and rose to get more plates and spoons, but he was smiling and obsequious as they came down. Hulett was in checkered coat and shining boots, and Mistress Anne's blue dress of China silk rustled nicely, sending little lights into

her eyes. She wore a high jeweled comb in her red hair, and a black beauty-patch, in the shape of a tiny running horse, on her cheek. She gave Andrew a demure, sober look as he rose. He had forgotten how pretty she was, and his heart was racing at a 2:40-mile gait.

HULETT said: "Sir, I thought that was you in the lot. My regards!"

Andrew nodded stiffly, and Floto raised his brows, surprised, as they sat down. The peas were too salty to eat, and a short horse being soon curried, it wasn't long till Hulett broke off his weather talk and called for wine all around. Not wanting to be under obligation to a man who had robbed, or helped rob him, Andrew said, "My treat," and rang a coin on the greasy table.

Hulett drawled: "Your animal is knocked out, sir? Maybe I could put you next to a fit one. I handle horses."

Andrew said: "It's possible I'll take advantage of that. Right now, I've another fish I must fry."

"Ah, yes?" Hulett breathed. "Well, Mistress Anne and I are leaving at daylight for New Orleans. But perhaps you'll be here when I get back?"

Andrew said: "Who knows?" And a steady, burning rashness was growing within him. Hulett rubbed him, somehow, the wrong way.

The girl appeared to sense the tension. The lace on her bodice gave little regular jumps. She looked over her red wine at Andrew and murmured lazily: "Here's to our Indian-killer!"

Hulett drained his glass and said: "Well, I've an errand to run. Shall I see you up, Mistress Anne?"

"No." She shook her head. "I'll make out fine."

Hulett left; and rising, Andrew asked to be shown where he was to sleep.

"Sleep?" Floto exclaimed. "It aint but just good dark."

"I had in mind to change my socks," Andrew said dryly.

His feet felt some better in them. He blew out the candle on the stand by the biggest of the four beds in the room; and when he opened the door, he saw that the girl had come up, though he hadn't heard her. She was standing in her own doorway, outlined against the glow of the coals in her fireplace. He stopped dead still.

SHE drawled softly: "Hello, Indian-killer. I mean, lady-killer."

For a moment, he thought maybe she had the two halves of that bill—that she wasn't what he thought she was.

She said: "You're not very friendly."

"Not with other men's wives, no."

She laughed a little. "But you did come here, you know."

He reached her in two steps. He said, "If this is what you want—" and pulled her to him and kissed her hard on the mouth, and he felt her wince from the two-day stubble on his chin. He released her and strode down the hall; and as he reached the barrels of whisky stacked there, where the warmth came up to age them, she flung a pair of low-voiced words after him: "Damn you!" And then, so low he wasn't sure he heard her: "Lady-killer."

Below, Hulett was drinking ale with Floto and a little gray-faced man with the look of a three-days' corpse; as Andrew shouldered into the hot coat, Hulett said, "A little red-dog, sir?"

Andrew shook his head. If Hulett was leaving at daylight, the thing he had to do must be done now. He went out into the wet blackness and music and stood there, swearing to himself, as his eyes got used to the dark.

He had the devil's own time getting the best one of the claybanks haltered and out the back door of the barn into the precipitous alley, and almost as bad a one finding his way up to Natchez-on-the-Hill; but after that it wasn't so hard to reach the farmer's wagon by the dark smithy. He could hear him snoring in there, louder than the soft pelting of the rain on the sheet, and he kept his distance, hellowing politely, until he roused the man and made himself known.

He said: "How much you want for some of that walnut dye?"

"Dye?" The farmer's teeth were chattering. "A bit a bottle. Can't you do till mawnin'?"

"Be too late. How strong is it?"

"Strong enough to work on the road. She's really b'iled down."

Andrew said: "Well, give me two bottles to start." He found a stick in the rubble around an old ox-shoeing frame by the smithy; and on the

end of it he made a swab with the wet socks from his pocket.

The farmer said: "You drunk? Lawd, if you wanted whisky, I got a hundred quarts of good Monongahela—"

"Cold sober." Andrew dribbled the walnut essence onto the claybank's back and smeared it with the swab as it ran darkly down. It spread easily on the wet hair. Already cold, the horse stood as if it were only being rubbed down.

From the seat of the wagon, the farmer said: "They'll catch you. That stuff really smells. . . . I—uh—I allus give a critter a good lye scrubbin' to take off the extra and the smell along with it, 'gin I get through."

"So do I." Andrew worked it into the withers.

"Cows, that is. Never fixed a hoss." The farmer got his boots and oil slicker and clambered down. "You aint doin' so good around his eyes, son. Leave me borry that bottle—"

It took six bottles to finish, and when the horse was finally scrubbed with some of the farmer's potash and rinsed with water from a trough by the smithy he was a beautiful dark bay in the faint light. It sort of hurt Andrew as he smeared him up with mud then, as if he had been kept in a small, dirty lot without a shed.

But still he couldn't tell if the smell of the walnut was on the horse or not, or if he had splattered a little on his clothes. He said: "Give me a quart of that forty-rod."

He had a nip of it, and blew some out of his mouth onto his coat, and then he soused the horse liberally, as if he had been riding him while drinking. "Comin' to see the fun?" he asked.

"Fun?" The farmer was abruptly brought down to earth. "What you aimin' to do? No—I don't want to know. I don't want to get mixed up in nothin'—" He swallowed. "I'm a deacon in the church up home."

Andrew grinned, and paid him. "May come back and make you a present if I have good luck," he said. "Never saw a better fixed job."

"Ho, now!" the farmer exclaimed in modest deprecation.

AS Andrew tied the horse to a heavy post in front of the inn, his excitement rising, he heard a laugh from inside, and Hulett exclaimed: "And that's the solemn truth, boys!" There was a rising burst of laughter that stopped, as if chopped in two with an ax, when Andrew shoved open the door.

Hulett and Floto and the gray-faced man and another, as lanky and tall as Andrew himself, sat around the table. Floto gawped, like a surprised fish, until Hulett exclaimed: "Ale for my friend Jackson! Stir your stumps,

Floto—" Then he saw Andrew's bottle. "Or are you drinking something better, sir?"

Andrew set the red whisky on the table. "My compliments. I've had enough." And as the gray-faced man wheezed, "Lord love us!" and reached for it, Andrew asked: "Could we have a light, Floto? I've come by a horse I'd like to show Mr. Hulett."

"Pretty wet to look at a horse," Hulett observed.

"Not this one, if you're itching for a bargain. Worth three hundred of any man's money—but I'd sell him for some less."

Hulett laughed. "I can imagine! Could I resell him around here or would I have to ship him?"

"I came by him more or less honestly," Andrew declared. "I—ah—have sort of a knack at three-hand poker."

"Ah?" Hulett rose. "Bring a good brand, Floto. How old is he?"

"Three past. Fifteen hands. Good heart and quarters."

FLOTO brought a couple of burning sticks that hissed in the rain, and the horse shied, eyes rolling white. Hulett walked around him silently, feeling him, and finally he mouthed the animal.

"He's five, not three, Mr. Jackson."

"He's three for purposes of selling."

Hulett chuckled. "Will a hundred dollars buy this critter?"

"He's worth three."

"No doubt. Shall we call it a hundred and a quarter and get back to the fire? Floto, throw him into the lot—eh, Jackson?"

"In hard money, maybe," Andrew agreed. "Or British notes."

Hulett laughed again. "You're a sharp trader, sir!"

Andrew was elated, as the man yelled up to ask if Mistress Anne would fetch down his bag. He hadn't meant to ask but seventy-five, which was about what he thought he should have had for his trouble and risk.

Floto came in, shivering and stomping off mud, and just then Anne brought the purse—a canvas bag, begrimed with the grease and dirt of years. Andrew kept his eyes away from her, and she was very quiet.

He held his hand out and Hulett counted in a mixture of gold and silver from Spain and France and England and America, too, and there were a couple of pieces Andrew recognized as having come from his own purse—a pair of greenish doubloons with the edges chipped just so. But he gave no sign. This was what he was looking for. This was the thing that justified his conscience entirely. He had just started to drop the money into his pocket when the door was shoved open and a swart man in a dripping coat and bee-gum hat came in.

Hulett snarled sarcastically: "Good evening, my dear friend—or is it tomorrow morning? This is Jackson. You could have saved me some trouble by coming sooner—"

The swart man blew water off his lips and just as sharply he growled: "And you could have saved me some by not insisting that I come at all."

"Señor, I wanted you to see for yourself that I'd had no chance to change any papers for false ones this time; because I'm just taking them from Mr. Jackson now," Hulett told him. "I'll kill you all the sooner, Jackson, if you go for that gun." He was all at once holding a horse pistol on Andrew's middle, eyes unblinking as a copperhead's. "Floto, bar that door and close the shutters. And first off, you country lawyer, I'll have the money back on that horse. I don't buy horses. Not when I can take 'em."

Andrew kept his hands carefully on the table. Some of the men had moved around behind him. The swart man was watching from the left as the bar rattled. Anne stood coolly by the hearth, but what she was thinking, Andrew couldn't tell from looking at her.

He said: "The horse is worth three hundred, Hulett. If I give you the money back, he's my horse. Is that all right?"

With broad humor, Hulett exclaimed: "Oh, absolutely! These gentlemen will witness the deal."

Andrew flung the heavy coin into Hulett's face, ducking in the same movement, and plunged for the stairs. He heard the gun snap, the hiss of the pan as it flashed, but no explosion, and the money rattled on the table and floor. A gun shook the air then, and a ball tore at his boot heel as he was halfway up the stairs. He fell and scrambled the rest of the way up on all fours.

Somebody was coming up behind him fast. He got to his feet at the top, and with a mighty heave he jerked the chock from under the jerky-barrel nearest the steps and sent the end barrel down. The others followed; and Hulett, almost to the top, turned to escape. The first barrel struck him and went completely over his body, with the four hundred pounds and more it held, and with wild cries the men below got out of its way as the other barrels shoved it mightily down.

The table collapsed under the impact, mugs and candle flying high, and then the second barrel bounded into the first and both heads flew out and whisky gushed across the room. There was a soughing roar as it went into the fire. Blue flame licked and shimmered back across the floor; and Andrew saw the men struggling with the door.

Here Are the Answers to Quizzes on page 35

"Signals Over!"

1. A fake forward pass in which the faking passer stands with the ball high in his hand and releases it to a back or end circling behind him.
2. An opposing lineman lets you through easily; suddenly you're blocked from the side—by a back usually—and the ball-carrier goes through the hole you left.
3. A lowly sub who spends the autumn sitting on the bench and not playing.
4. After the game is over, he knows the plays that should have been called. Sometimes called a "second-guesser" in other sports.
5. A player intent on impressing the crowd, a show-off.
6. The "naked reverse," a play in which the whole team goes one way while the ball-carrier sneaks the other, unprotected by interference.
7. Usually several laterals on the end of a forward pass. The ball hops like a flea from hand to hand.
8. The lineman's cry to get down low and go under the opposition, through the "subway" of their legs.
9. Position of defense. In this case, seven man line, one man backing it, two backs toward the sides farther back, and still farther, a single safety man.
10. An underhand pass, "shoveled" usually to a back just about to go through the line of scrimmage.
11. A halfback who runs miles from sideline to sideline, but rarely gains.
12. A mythical back to whom the center passes the ball when all four backs forget the play: "The little back who wasn't there!"

"How They Kept Christmas"

1. Isaac Newton
2. Alexander Woollcott
3. George Washington
4. Hamlin Garland
5. Charles Dickens
6. Felix Mendelssohn
7. Washington Irving
8. Winston Churchill
9. Eugene Field
10. William Howard Taft

He ran down half a dozen steps to Hulett. He was a limp, oozing bundle of broken bones, his head crushed. Andrew caught the body up and tried to carry it, but as the outer door opened, the fire roared up the staircase almost into his face. He dropped Hulett, and shielding his face, made his way up to the hall.

He burst into a room on the left—a candle-lit room that must have been the girl's, from the clothing thrown across the bed—and kicked the shutters open. Someone below fired at him as he started through the un-

glazed window. He jumped and drew his pistol and fired blindly at the flash, and a man snarled loudly in Spanish.

The ell roof was slick. Andrew went down the back side of it a sight faster than he intended, and sprawled heavily into the mud under the low eave. He got up, shaken, hobbling on his heelless boot. Cries of fire were going up everywhere, and guns were sounding the alarm, and the racket was spreading plumb up onto the hill as he found himself running down a little alley.

A bunch of men, coming to the fire, almost ran over him. He jumped aside, hand under his coat on his other pistol. He couldn't seem to get enough breath. He stood watching the men against the glow of the fire reflecting from the buildings in front of the inn. No one was coming this way, and he leaned against the fence, panting.

The fire gained unbelievably fast. All at once the entire place was lit, red and ugly, and the roar grew with the rolling smoke. Flames shot out an upper window now, lapping under the eaves, and then the pine clapboards were seeping smoke and flame.

Wary lest he run into Floto or the Spaniard, he went back. He wanted to get his mare and the horse which Hulett had said should be his, and he wanted to ask Anne, once and for all, if she did or didn't have anything to do with taking his purse.

The front half of the roof was ablaze as he neared the back door. Men were dragging out odds and ends; but most people—hundreds of them—stood back in a watching circle. Gamblers and planters and farmers and floaters and women from the Gut, and ladies and gentlemen drawn from the ballrooms on the hill. There was no hope of fighting the fire, and in this rain, no need. It couldn't spread.

A HAND held Andrew's shoulder; and General Kincannon, bare-headed, wheezed: "I've been looking for you. They say someone didn't get out."

"Wasn't me," Andrew assured him. He added abruptly: "It was Hulett. There was sort of a fight. I guess Floto double-crossed us—told him about me—"

The General laughed. "Foxed you, didn't I? No—Floto didn't know a thing. He's a scoundrel, hand in glove with Hulett—but anything he knew in this case, Hulett told him. Lord, I'm glad that dog is out of the way—"

"I guess I don't follow you," Andrew told him stiffly. "I gave Floto that half-dollar—"

"Oh, that!" The General laughed again. "That was for your benefit—to make everything seem in the old spy tradition to you. There was no

other half to it. I let the news get to Hulett, by ways of my own, that you'd be carrying certain papers—which, by the way, are blank. We've known he's a petty spy, retailing little dabs of information to the Spaniards, but we couldn't ever get anything strong enough on him to bring him to court. So I figured I'd let him jump you for that packet, and that you'd do him in or cripple him till he'd bother us no more." He smiled. "You see? And now I owe you ten pound, don't I?"

He was opening a thick wallet stuffed with British notes. "Got a bit scared of Warren and Company—Warren's gambling—and drew all of my money out today, reason I'm packing so much. H'm—ten pound—"

"I'll have none of your blood-money!" Andrew told him angrily. And, lips tautening over his teeth, he snarled: "Are you aware, sir, that I might have been shot in the back, like a dog, in one of these black alleys for that packet—"

THE General's bearded lips hung open in childish puzzlement. "Oh, but that's a chance one must take in work like this—"

Beyond him, Andrew saw Mistress Anne approaching. She looked little and forlorn and—well—he didn't know what. She came on up, the tip of her tongue between her lips, and finally she said: "You really played whaley in there, Indian-killer."

Andrew was suddenly awkward. He blurted: "I'm sorry about Mr.

Hulett. I think that first whisky-barrel got him—"

She glanced at the roaring flames, shooting a hundred feet above the inn. "Well, if it didn't, it makes no difference now. I figured when you got here you'd turn the trick some way." She smiled abruptly. "Let's get where it's warm and have some hot wine, huh?"

Andrew backed away as if he had stooped to drink from a spring and found an adder in it. He couldn't speak. He backed another step, and another. The smile was dying on her lips.

He found his voice then. He said: "Madam, may I present you to the General? General Kincannon—Mistress Anne—"

She glanced perfunctorily at Kincannon as he bowed. To Andrew she said: "The wine is good at the Blue Boar—"

"I haven't time," Andrew told her. "Perhaps the General—"

Kincannon wheezed: "Madam, my time is at your disposal!" And his little round cheeks were pink above his beard as he bowed again.

MISTRESS ANNE stared at him, at his fine clothes, and at the wallet, unbelieving. But she recovered instantly as he straightened, and this time her smile was not perfunctory. She gave him both barrels.

Andrew headed swiftly for the lot; and at the gate, knocking aside a burning shingle that floated down, he looked back. The General's lips were moving, and the girl's. She took Kincannon's arm, and the man waddled happily away beside her.

"Good enough for both of them!" Andrew muttered.

He opened the gate and whistled at the shining horse standing against the barn.

*Illustrated by
Manning
de V. Lee*



Hulett, almost to the top, turned to escape, but too late—the first four-hundred-pound barrel struck him.



World War II's most unbelievable story—how OSS officers worked in Japanese-occupied Bangkok with the help of the Regent while Siam was officially at war with us.

MISSION TO

THE third of April, 1945, found husky twenty-six-year-old Howard Palmer hidden in a tiny room in the heart of Bangkok, capital of Siam. He was about a thousand miles ahead of the Allied lines. Fifteen thousand Japanese troops were within a few blocks of him. Nearly ten times that number were in the country itself.

The door opened; a simply dressed but impressive Siamese entered. The group in the room rose to their feet. The visitor was Luang Pradit, Regent of the King of Siam, ruler of the fabulous Kingdom of the White Elephant, open ally of the Japanese troops that occupied his country, leader of a nation officially at war with Great Britain and the United States—and also the daring secret leader of the Siamese underground. He had come to meet the newly arrived American officers of the Office of Strategic Services. Lt. Palmer was introduced.

"And how is your father?" asked the Regent quietly.

"Very well, thank you, sir. He sends his very best regards to you."

"Thank you. Remember me to him. He has always been one of our greatest friends. I am very glad that you have come back to help us."

Such was the historic meeting of Siamese-born Howard Palmer with the legendary "Ruth" top secret code name of the Regent, with whom he was to help organize the most successful and extensive intrigue of the war. The story of this OSS mission and of Lieutenant—now Captain—Palmer's leading rôle in it is one of the most amazing achievements in the secret files of Major General William J. Donovan's Office of Strategic Services, American secret service in World War II.

Howard Palmer was born in Siam, the son of American missionary parents, and lived in Bangkok until at the age of nine, he was sent home for his

education—high school in Evanston, Illinois, and then Harvard. A month after graduation from the Harvard Law School he enlisted as a private in the Army.

One year later Palmer was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Field Artillery and assigned to the newly formed 88th Division. Much to his dismay, he was made an instructor at Fort Sill in Oklahoma, and it began to look as though he wouldn't be able to get into action. But one day some months later his Colonel asked his help in filling out a very detailed confidential questionnaire.

The report completed, the Colonel leaned back in his chair. "Now I'll have to ask you the sixty-four-dollar question. Will you undertake extra-hazardous duty behind enemy lines?"

Palmer's "Yes!" was unhesitating. This was March, 1944; and both Palmer and his C.O. believed that be-

STORIES of FACT



BANGKOK

by Lt. Comdr. Richard M. Kelly, U.S.N.R.

cause of his language qualifications in French and German he would see duty in the European theater, where General Eisenhower was planning the invasion of Normandy. Siam—or Thailand as it was then known—was far from his thoughts. His parents had left there in the spring of 1941 because of ill health after thirty-five years of service. The war in that theater was going very slowly. The Japs had invaded India, and things didn't look very good for the Allies. Furthermore, at that time our forces were concentrating on the Nazis in Europe.

Finally, in May, 1944, Palmer's orders came through: he was to report to something called the Office of Strategic Services in Washington, D.C. The parting words of his Colonel were hardly reassuring.

"You'd better get married, Howard!"

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, that ten thousand dollars would come in pretty handy for your widow!"

In Washington, Palmer presented himself to a young Major. "There's a friend of yours here," said the Major. The friend was sixty-year-old Miss Lucy Starling, a veteran Siamese missionary, well known to both Palmer and his family. She had been working with OSS on plans to penetrate Siam, and it was she who had recommended that Palmer be recruited.

This surprise development delighted the young officer. Knowing the Siamese and their love of independence, which they had maintained for seven hundred years in face of both Western and Eastern pressure, he felt certain that their declaration of war against the United States had not had popular support. It had happened after a Siamese dictator named Pibul, an arch collaborator with the Japanese, had

seized control of the government. Americans who knew the Siamese and the Siamese minister in Washington, Seni Pramoj, believed that the majority of Siamese officials and the people were hostile to the Japanese and friendly to the Allies, particularly the United States.

Early in 1943 two emissaries from Luang Pradit, the Regent, had turned up in China and reported that they represented the Siamese underground. This was the first news of that mysterious Oriental kingdom that had reached Allied ears since Pearl Harbor. These men had been flown to Washington, where they had joined the Free Thai or Free Siamese movement. Working with the Siamese minister in Washington, OSS had recruited a group of Siamese students who had been studying in the United States, and under the direction of Major Nichol Smith they had been sent to China to attempt the long, perilous overland infiltration of their homeland. Their fascinating adven-

and EXPERIENCE

tures, the long frustrating delays, dangers, difficulties and casualties are detailed in Nichol Smith's recent book, "Into Siam."

However, at the time that Palmer arrived by air in Ceylon in July, 1944, Siam was still a big question-mark to the OSS authorities attached to Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten's Southeast Asia Command. It was also a fascinating challenge. For months no word had come from the Siamese students who had set out from China, save news that two of them had been killed at the border.

Palmer was immediately set to work training Siamese agents in Ceylon, who were to attempt the dangerous mission by submarine. This operation was tried in August, but it was unsuccessful when the weather blew up too rough to land in rubber boats from the sub. In October, a team of agents was dropped in by parachute, but they failed to come up on their radio, and were naturally presumed to be lost or in difficulty.

Several other teams of Siamese agents were slipped in, but still there was no news. The land of the White Elephant was swallowing up OSS agents, and yet the secrets of its supposed underground were unknown after more than a year of effort to penetrate the mystery. It began to look as though the Japs and the Siamese collaborators had too firm a grip on the rich kingdom.

Then it happened: The radio shack at Szemao, deep in southern China, suddenly crackled into activity

after months of heart-breaking silence. Contact had been finally established with the Siamese underground. The OSS agents who had parachuted into Siam had made their way to Bangkok, where they had met the Regent, Luang Pradit, chief of the underground. He had put them in touch with some of the Siamese students from OSS in China, who had been held in protective custody by the Siamese police. It was one of those tiny radios, laboriously carried over five hundred miles through the heart of Jap-infested jungles that at long last had pierced the iron curtain shrouding Siam from the Allied world.

OSS now had an Intelligence channel direct to the leaders of a country officially allied to the Japanese! Two years of planning and strategic operational effort had begun to pay off. If the Siamese underground actually existed on a large scale with top government officials double-crossing the Japanese, the intelligence dividends and possible operational use of the country's military potential against the Japs were almost limitless.

General Donovan was quick to take advantage of this phenomenal development. The Joint Chiefs of Staff—with altogether too little direct information on the Japanese—and the U.S. State Department gave the green light.

The first step was to concentrate the direction and the organization of the Siamese operation at Ceylon. Nichol Smith's experience with the students, though ultimately successful, had shown that the overland approach was

too long, too dangerous and too difficult.

"Ruth," as the Regent was known in the top secret messages dealing with the Siamese underground, wanted American officers to come into Bangkok and operate secretly with him. It seemed like a tremendous risk, but OSS had the men who were willing to take it. By radio, details of the planned infiltration were arranged. A plane was to land the men in the Gulf of Siam (after a 1500-mile flight from India), where they would be met by a Siamese Coast Guard launch, which would take them to Bangkok. Chosen from the volunteers for the mission were Dick Greenlee of New York City, a thirty-three-year-old former member of General Donovan's law firm, and Major John Wester, an American business man who had spent seventeen years in Bangkok, been interned by the Siamese and after his repatriation had joined the Army and then the OSS.

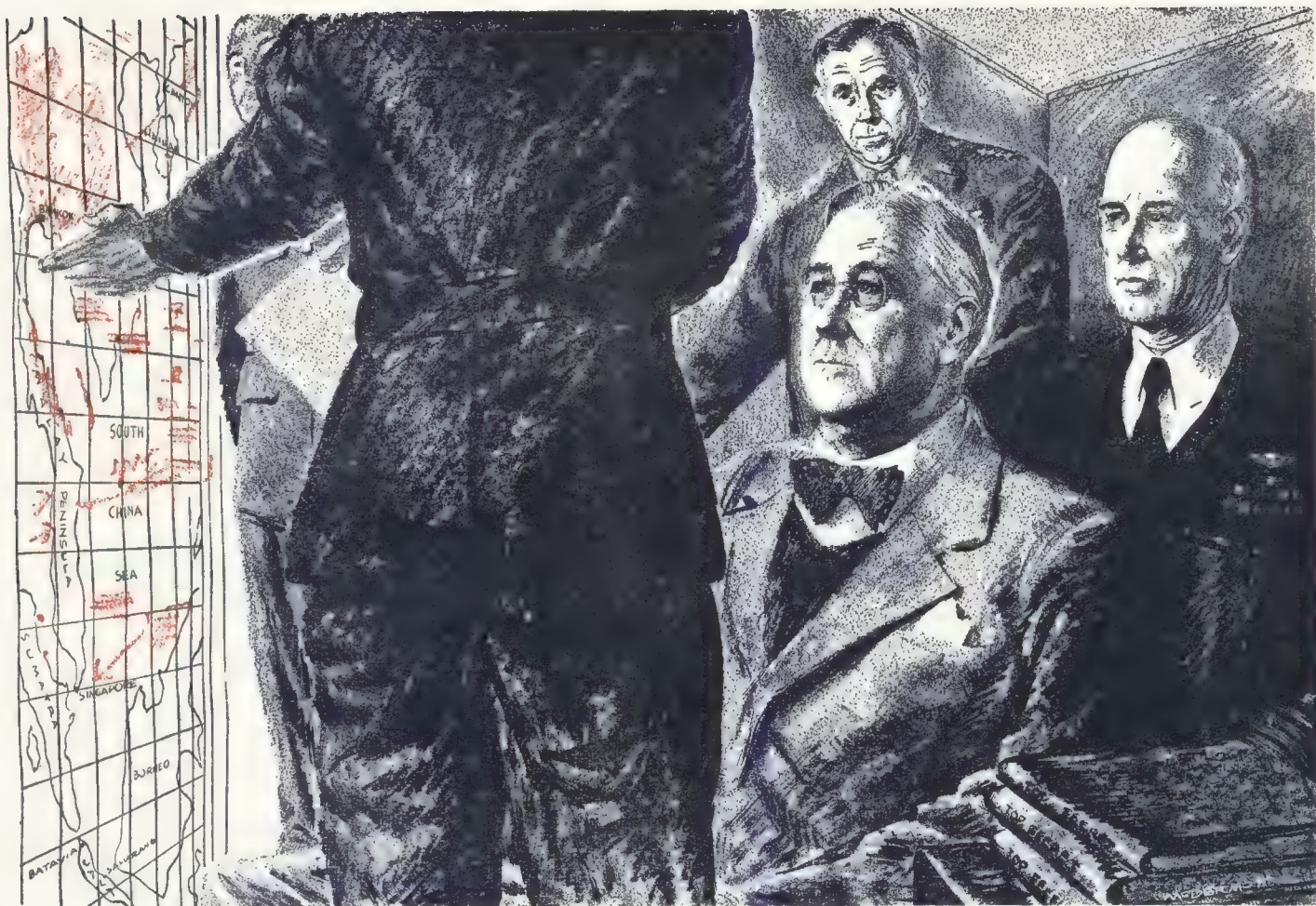
Palmer, who had been doing combat intelligence on the Burma front in the fall of 1944, was eager to be with the first American party to enter Siam. He thought his hopes were to be realized when he was returned to Ceylon in January. But just before the mission took off, OSS chiefs decided that with Wester's long experience and many top contacts in the country, he was indispensable. And for the crucially important task of evaluating the scope and sincerity of the underground, it was thought better that his companion be an outsider who would not be prejudiced in favor of the Siamese. So it was to be just Wester and Greenlee, with the understanding that Palmer was to follow immediately afterward.

Late in January, 1945, the pair took off on one of the strangest missions in history. The long flight to the Gulf of Siam was accomplished without incident. The Siamese Coast Guard boat was spotted at the rendezvous; the two Americans were transferred; the plane took off and the OSS men were taken to Bangkok, where they were holed up in an upstairs bedroom of a house belonging to a close friend and underground collaborator of the Regent's.

Immediately after their arrival they held a series of secret meetings with the Regent, and some but not all of the top military figures in the Siamese government. Detailed information on the Japanese forces in the country was turned over to the OSS men, as well as the Regent's proposal for the landing of two American divisions, with the help of which he believed he could throw the Japanese out of his country.

This was a most remarkable proposal. Both Greenlee and Wester were convinced of the Regent's sin-





"'Ruth's' daring proposition was presented to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to President Roosevelt."

cerity and desire to liberate his country. But such momentous plans could not be transmitted by radio. A plane was ordered to pick up Greenlee, and five days after his arrival he was on his way back to India. Without delay he was immediately flown to Washington, where "Ruth's" daring proposition was presented to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to President Roosevelt. To the President, Greenlee brought a gold cigarette-case with the seal of Siam, a present from "Ruth."

The Joint Chiefs studied the Regent's proposal with great interest, but made no immediate decision on an Allied-aided revolt of the Siamese. The plans for the Pacific War called for a more direct attack on the Japanese home islands; and already the American Navy was beating a bloody steam-roller path toward the jumping-off points for such a development. General MacArthur had landed in the Philippines. At the time, there were no extra troops for a Siamese venture.

But the Intelligence windfall was something else again. The highest diplomatic and military authorities considered the successful starting of Operation Ruth to be one of the greatest underground achievements of the war. OSS was asked to develop the Siamese Intelligence sources on the

Japanese to the fullest. The Siamese were to be told by OSS that until otherwise instructed, they were to concentrate on securing Allied Intelligence, building up their underground forces and preparing for a revolt.

This was the message that Greenlee brought back to Ceylon in March. It was a decision that was sure to disappoint the Siamese underground, which was playing a critically dangerous double game with the Japs. They were anxious to strike without delay, because the Japs were daily becoming more suspicious and more oppressive in their demands. It was to carry out this ticklish directive of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that Greenlee, with Palmer, now prepared to return to Bangkok.

THE trip, like the first entry, was to be made in a Catalina flying-boat, which was the only plane with sufficient range to land them in the Gulf of Siam. Captain Palmer vividly remembers the drama of his return to his birthplace after seventeen years' absence.

"Greenlee and I left Kandy by car for Columbo late in March. From Columbo we took a plane to an air base in India, where we went aboard a British-manned Catalina. The 1500-

mile trip to our rendezvous in the Gulf of Siam was largely uneventful, and I slept a good bit of the way. We had a few tense moments when we flew through the Ten-Degree Channel just above the surface of the water to avoid the Jap radar on the Andaman and Nicobar islands. Nothing untoward happened, however, and I went back to sleep as the plane flew across the Kra Isthmus. I was awakened just before we landed, and there below us in the darkness I could see the flashing light from a tiny launch. The pilot ordered us to hold on as he came in to land; and it was well he did, because it was the roughest landing I ever experienced. The plane hit with a terrific smash, which I later learned split the hull so badly that the aircraft had to be junked on its return to base.

"For the moment, however, Greenlee and I were concerned only with picking ourselves up and getting aboard the Siamese launch. This was accomplished without too much difficulty, and immediately afterward the plane roared away into the night. We were apprehensive about Jap air and naval patrols, but were reassured by our reception committee, which consisted of the Siamese Coast Guard crew, who were in league with the

underground, and an OSS-trained Siamese student named Poon.

"It was a twenty-four-hour trip to Bangkok, and naturally I was tremendously excited at returning to the land and people I knew so well. My feelings took a more practical bent about dusk of the next night when we passed a Japanese naval patrol boat as we entered the Chaopha River. Greenlee and I kept out of sight, and we were not challenged.

"As we neared the city I recognized the familiar shoreline shining in the moonlight. It was about eleven at night when we pulled up to a wooden pier just fifty yards from the royal landing. Greenlee and I took our musette bags and sidearms and dashed up the pier to a waiting car. We were quickly driven to a private house, where Major Wester was waiting for us. This house was owned by an underground guerrilla leader and close friend of the Regent named Charn Bunnag. He was a member of one of the most prominent Siamese families, and his home was chosen for our secret OSS headquarters because of his absolute reliability.

"WHEN we reached the house, we were ushered to a small room, about twelve by ten, with a private bath. The room contained one bed, two cots, a small table and three chairs. It had three windows, all closely shuttered. We were requested by our host not to leave this room. I felt as though I were being locked in a prison cell; and prison it was and prison it had to be. Any sign of white men in this 'enemy' capital swarming with Japanese and dark-skinned Siamese would have been fatal to our entire mission—not to mention what fate it would have meant for us personally.

"The only white men left in Bangkok were the heavily guarded internees, and a handful of Germans and Swedes who were all very well known. The next morning we found we could see some of these internees from our room, as they were lodged on the grounds of Vajiravudh College, a Siamese institution next door. We had been secreted near these people so that in case of an open outbreak with the Japs, we could join forces with them and probably have a better chance for our lives. As there were only three hundred of them, unarmed and worn out by three years' confinement, it was a slim chance at best.

"Major Wester was delighted to see us. He showed plainly the terrific strain under which he had been living—all alone for the past eight weeks under such confining conditions. He told us the situation had deteriorated badly in Greenlee's absence. The Japanese were obviously tightening up. The Allied internees had previously been allowed to visit the city

at certain hours during the daytime. Now that had been stopped.

"There were also numerous other indications that Japanese suspicions had increased. Their demands on the Siamese Government were becoming more and more difficult. Allied bombings, which had already devastated part of Bangkok, had been stepped up, and just a few days previously bombs had destroyed the house across the street from the Regent's palace and killed one of his dearest friends in the underground. This naturally made the position of the OSS mission a delicate one.

"During Greenlee's absence, Major Wester had scored a clean twenty-four-hour intelligence beat with the first news of the Japanese taking over the government of French Indo-China. This move had been accomplished by treachery, and the Siamese were quite properly apprehensive that their country, surrounded on two sides by the French possession, was next on the list. It all added to the tension, which had taken its toll of Major Wester; he obviously was very near a complete breakdown and would have to be evacuated. Later, when I had spent the same amount of time sequestered in Bangkok, I came to appreciate very well what he had gone through, completely alone in that tiny room, surrounded on all sides by Japanese and Siamese collaborators.

"Early the first morning after our arrival the Regent himself visited our hide-away to welcome us and learn the answer to the proposal he had made to the American authorities and Joint Chiefs of Staff. Greenlee had brought with him a present from President Roosevelt for the Regent—a very beautiful gold pen and pencil set. The Regent had wanted an autographed picture of the President, which Mr. Roosevelt had been willing to send to him, but the State Department had overruled such a gift for security reasons. Should the Japanese ever find such a picture, the intrigue might have come to a bloody end.

"The Regent was understandably very disappointed to learn that his plan for a general uprising with Allied aid would have to be postponed. Greenlee stressed the Allied requirements for Intelligence, and urged the Regent to continue to build up his underground forces. We particularly emphasized that no open action should be taken against the Japs until the Allied authorities gave the word.

"The Regent knew very well that the more than one hundred thousand Jap troops in his country and the other armies in Indo-China, Burma and Malaya would be too strong for the Siamese underground without forceful Allied help. Fearful that the Japs might not wait, but treacherously strike the first blow, he wanted more

arms. We made plans with him to organize a number of guerrilla areas where arms could be received by parachute, and underground forces trained.

"Our immediate concern was to expand the high priority Intelligence network in the country. Because of the great difficulty OSS had had to date in infiltrating Siamese agents from China and Ceylon, we decided that it would be wisest to utilize those teams who had already arrived in the country. Most of those teams had been placed in protective custody by the Siamese police and not permitted to operate. To achieve their release was a ticklish procedure, as not all Siamese police officials were at that time members of the underground, and certain of the internees had been reported to the Japanese.

"Finally it was arranged by the use of some elaborate stratagems, at which the Siamese excelled; and not long afterward we had an extensive chain of secret radio stations operating in different strategic centers of the kingdom. These sets communicated not only with us at Bangkok, but also direct with OSS headquarters at Ceylon. With this development our flow of vital intelligence on Japanese moves and plans in the whole South-east Asia theater greatly increased.

"OUR routine at Charn Bunnag's house was confining. Twice during the day a single trusted servant brought us our meals, which we ate in our little room. We usually had three radio schedules a day, and much of the time was spent preparing cables, coding them, decoding the messages from base and planning our operations. At night we were permitted to go downstairs for dinner, which we had with our host. After this we would usually slip out of the house for a brief walk in the compound, never going more than ten yards from the house. We never saw more than five or six Siamese, and most of the time we were completely alone. To put it mildly, it began to get on our nerves; and shortly after our arrival several things happened which added to our uneasiness.

"Our principal contact with the Regent and the underground was Col. Samroeng, G-2 of the Siamese army. He worked daily with the Jap Intelligence chiefs, and brought us many extremely valuable items of information. Many of his best tips were on Jap supply dumps and troop concentrations, and these were most enthusiastically received by our Air Force. Soon these lush Jap targets were being plastered with results that brought us grateful thanks from Headquarters and made the Siamese very happy. Unfortunately, however, mistakes were made and things did not always work out so well.

"One day the Colonel requested us to warn Headquarters not to bomb a certain railroad station which was the hub of a major Siamese troop movement. Whenever the Japs moved their troops, the Siamese always shifted their forces to counterbalance the strategic implications of the new Jap positions. This was explained to the Japs in a variety of ingenious ways; and the explanations, though hardly satisfactory, were at least the equal of the reasons the Japs gave for their moves. However, it all added up to a very strange situation.

"We transmitted Colonel Samroeng's request, but tragically it arrived too late. Allied planes, which had spotted the unusual troop concentrations around the railroad station, had bombed it very thoroughly, with a resulting high loss of life to the Siamese. The first news we had of this unfortunate slip-up reached us when Colonel Samroeng came around in a very excited frame of mind. He told us that his Chief of Staff was terribly angered at the Siamese casualties. Here they were risking their lives to betray the Japanese, anxious to fight them when the Allies gave the word, and our planes had attacked them after they had expressly warned us in advance!

"Naturally, we felt very badly about the incident, and were particularly concerned about its bearing on continued Siamese cooperation. We did our best to smooth things over, and sent a very strong cable to Headquarters. We received back an apology and an explanation of the mishap which we hoped brought things back to normal. Realizing the position of the Siamese and the risks they were running, I certainly couldn't blame them for being upset.

"On April 8, just a week after our arrival, we were sitting around in our room about four o'clock in the afternoon when we heard a muffled explosion from the direction of the river. At first we thought it was a bombing, but then realized that there had been no air-raid alarm. For four hours we fretted and worried over the incident. We were further mystified when our host, late for dinner, merely smiled in answer to our eager question, and denied any knowledge of what had happened.

"It wasn't until the next morning that we got the full story from Colonel Samroeng. He told us gleefully that our host had directed some of his guerrillas in the sabotage of a Japanese munitions warehouse. They had managed to secrete a time bomb the night before in the warehouse, which had gone off the next day when a large number of Japanese soldiers were relaxing just outside the building. The blast had destroyed the warehouse and killed most of the Japs.



"The bomb went off while Japanese relaxed just outside the building."

"Details as to the Jap casualties were never learned, for a cordon was immediately thrown about the area. The Japanese later gave out a story that the blast had been caused by some officers playing with artillery shells for recreation! For all I know, that is what they thought really happened. We cabled the news to Headquarters. Their response was at first enthusiastic; then in later messages a note of caution crept in—we were to warn the Siamese against further acts of sabotage, lest they might precipitate stringent Japanese countermeasures against the underground.

"Shortly after this explosion we decided to move to a new hide-out. We were fearful of security breaches; we knew that our radio had operated for ten weeks at this one location and might have caused Jap suspicions; and finally we wanted a place where 'Ruth' could visit us without fear of the Japs. As the acting king of the country, his position naturally prevented his paying frequent calls, and any such activity would have had the Japs on his neck in no time. After his first visit he had not come to see us at all. Our new location was to be a house on the river just upstream from the Regent's palace, and it was picked

so that he could slip out unobserved to see us at night.

"The trip to our new quarters was made in an Army Staff car with Colonel Samroeng at the wheel. The three of us huddled in the back of the car in civilian clothes. It was one of the most trying experiences of my entire time in Bangkok. The journey took us through downtown Bangkok, always crowded with Jap soldiers. Shortly after we had started, the horn stuck; and in spite of all our protestations, the Colonel just kept on going. Finally, when just one block from our new hide-out, the horn miraculously stopped. It was probably the least secret move that three American agents ever made in an enemy stronghold.

"Our new place was a great improvement over the old one. It was a large house, surrounded on three sides by a ten-foot wall, with only the side facing the river unprotected. The houses across the street had been all bombed out, and beyond hoping that the planes would not return to destroy our house, it seemed to be ideal. Unlike our original confinement to one room, we now had the run of this house, and nothing felt better than our relative freedom in these new surroundings.

"That night the Siamese asked us if we wouldn't like to go out for a little entertainment. We were all very tired and begged off. It wasn't until some days later that I found out the extent to which they had gone to arrange a party for us. Realizing the strain of living in one room, they had secretly moved all the people out of a certain block in Bangkok, thrown a cordon of underground police around the block and arranged an elaborate dinner with entertainers. Had we had the slightest idea that they had gone to such an effort and expense, we would have been delighted to attend the party. It was just another indication of how wonderful those people were to us.

"April 13th was a bad day all around. First we received news from the Regent early in the morning that President Roosevelt had died. It was a tremendous shock to all of us. The Regent had us wire his sympathy to the State Department. Later that same day there was a huge air raid which killed many Siamese civilians and knocked out both the city's power plants and the water supply. This was a useless piece of work, for it didn't bother the Japs at all, because they had their own military facilities; but it suspended all electricity and running water in the whole city. Considering our position as (OSS) representatives, once again we felt pretty miserable about it, but there was nothing we could do beyond complaining to base and making sincere apologies.

Illustrated by John McDermott



"It must be remembered that although we were members of a secret American mission hidden in Bangkok and were receiving all sorts of aid of an Intelligence nature, all Allied authorities were by no means convinced that the Regent might not be playing a double game with us as well as with the Japs. It seemed so incredible that a whole nation could be involved in such an intrigue that many hard-bitten Allied authorities, particularly among the British, who were in command in that theater, were very skeptical.

"The country's considerable resources were completely enlisted in support of the Japanese war effort. Though militarily weak, the country was at war with both Great Britain and the United States. From the outside, there was certainly plenty of sound ground for suspecting the genuineness of the Siamese underground, and we in OSS were always trying to persuade the top brass that the underground was really significant. Dependent as we were on support from the Air Forces, we were particularly anxious to win their enthusiasm.

"With this in mind, and to prove the effectiveness of the Siamese with whom we were working, OSS had accepted a supposedly impossible assignment from General Clare Chennault. It was to rescue Lt. Bill McGarry, one of Chennault's closest friends and an ace of the fabulous AVG or Flying

"We waited and tensely watched as they made their lumbering runs through

Tigers. The last news anyone had had of McGarry was that he had parachuted down in the Siamese jungle three years before.

"Through 'Ruth' and the head of the Siamese police, Luang Adul Detcharat, we had located McGarry in the Siamese-manned internment camp in Bangkok. Fortunately, he had been picked up by the Siamese and was still under their control. Naturally, the Japanese knew of such a prominent prisoner, and so his escape required an exceptionally elaborate deception. It was a dangerous move for us, but we felt that it was worth the risk.

"The Chief of Police made the plans and undertook to do the job himself. At dusk one evening he drove to the internment camp. A message was sent to McGarry, who was out in the compound, requesting his presence at the superintendent's quarters. As he approached the Police Chief's car, he was ordered to get in and was quickly driven out the gates. No inmates and none of the guards knew what had happened.

"The next day when McGarry was reported missing, the other internees, the guards and the Japs were in an uproar. Escape didn't seem possible. McGarry, like the others, had given up hope of trying to get away. They knew they were months on foot from

Allied territory, and that being white, they would be spotted at once. The Police Chief ordered an investigation and had his men drag all the canals in the vicinity of the camp 'in search of McGarry's body.' The theory was spread around and reported to the Japs that he had been despondent and probably taken his own life. Finally the investigation was dropped.

"McGarry was driven directly to our headquarters. When he arrived, Greenlee and I were downstairs in civilian clothes talking to 'Ruth.' Poor McGarry didn't know what was happening to him, and the Chief of Police had not enlightened him. He walked in on us, and was completely dumfounded to be greeted by two Americans and the Regent of the King of Siam. After three years of captivity the shock was almost too much for him—especially when after an elaborate steak dinner, with Siamese beer and other delicacies, he was told a plane was coming in a few days to evacuate him.

"There was a delay of a week in the arrival of the Catalina. I was to accompany Wester and McGarry back to India with a complete list of our guerrilla needs and details of the areas where we had arranged to receive OSS teams to train the underground forces. In addition to McGar-



the swells and breathed a fervent prayer of thanksgiving when both made it."

ry and Wester, who were returning for much-needed hospitalization and rest, we decided also to evacuate Colonel Tawi Julasap, Annapolis-trained officer of the Siamese Air Force, better known to us as Colonel Dickey. It was believed that he would be of great aid to the Allied air force in planning air operations against Japanese targets in Siam and the surrounding countries. We also decided to take out three crack pilots of the Siamese air force who would be helpful in the planned air-supply operations for the underground.

"We left Greenlee alone in Bangkok about eleven one morning and boarded the same Coast Guard cutter for the long run to our rendezvous with the Catalina. The trip out was without incident. All white men kept well concealed whenever Japanese or native craft were in the vicinity. At daybreak we were well out into the Gulf, and tied up at a fishing stake to await the planes. At ten p.m. we were under way again for the pinpoint. The wind and sea were rising, and the moon obscured by clouds.

"All of us, particularly the fighter pilot McGarry, were apprehensive as to whether the Catalina would be able to land, and if it did whether it would be able to take off again in such a rough sea. This plus the ever-present

fear that Jap patrol planes might interfere from their near-by bases had us in a fine state of tension by the time we first heard the motors of the two big Cats. Because of the great risks, the British always sent along an extra plane as escort in case something should happen to the first.

"Recognition signals were exchanged, and before McGarry's surprised eyes the crack British pilots put the big planes down and taxied over to our little craft. Our party split up and went aboard quickly. Several cases of Siamese beer for the plane crews—a present from the Regent—were very well received by the RAF. The take-off was rough, but we made it, and were back in Calcutta the next day.

"McGarry and Wester were rushed to the hospital for care. The amazement and sincere admiration with which the Air Force received the delivery of the long-lost McGarry, who had been snatched from a prison camp fifteen hundred miles away at their request, assured me that it had been worth the risk. More than anything else, this feat put us in solid with the Air Force. Operation 'Ruth' and the Siamese underground could now count on all-out support. I also asked them to go easy on Bangkok as a target. After all, I pointed out, 'I live there!'

"Now, if we could only get the necessary arms allocation in Ceylon, the trip would be a complete success. My reception was again most encouraging. SEAC had none too many supplies, and what they had were being readied for the British plan to recapture Singapore by striking at Malaya. OSS fortunately had a supply of its own weapons on hand, sufficient to arm eight thousand troops. And while I was there, permission was received from the Theater Commander to use these arms to build up the Siamese underground.

"While completing these arrangements and waiting for the next moon period for my return, some upsetting news came in from Greenlee back in Bangkok. He radioed that 'Ruth' had warned him the Japanese were catching on to the activity of solitary planes in the Gulf of Siam, and were investigating. Also some natives not in the underground had been overheard remarking after the last trip of the Coast Guard launch that 'another Allied plane must be coming.'

"This was critical, for the Catalinas were our only means of infiltrating men and supplies. Also more important to me at the moment was that this route represented my only means of getting back to Bangkok. The monsoon season was at hand, and when it set in, all long-range hops of this character would be automatically ruled

out, anyway. For a while it looked bad for my return, but I finally managed to persuade them to let me try it.

"Just three weeks after leaving Bangkok, I was once again on my way back in a Catalina. With me this time I brought two more OSS-trained Siamese agents, Dr. Ekchai, a competent medical man, and Sall, another radio-man. We also brought a lot of extra radio gear, with the opening up of the guerrilla areas, for our communication needs had expanded tremendously.

"Because of Greenlee's warning, we were more than a little bit nervous as we came in for our landing. In addition to our increased apprehension of Jap interference, there was a deep swell. In spite of it, the pilots set the two big planes down as well as could be expected, and we started to transfer our men and supplies. It was too rough for the planes to taxi close to the launch, and Navy Lt. Dan Gilmartin, who was my conducting officer, was forced to use rubber boats to ferry us across.

"The sea was getting rougher all the time, and three of the four rubber boats were lost in the process. Finally all of us, including Gilmartin, got aboard the Siamese craft. We were soaking wet, and at that point we told Gilmartin we'd have to take him to Bangkok with us. He fell for this—said it suited him all right. Naturally, that wasn't in the cards, and he took off again for the Catalina after telling us to stand by in case they should be wrecked in the take-off.

"It was really dangerous, and I guess they rather assumed we always stood by to see them off, though in actual fact the Coast Guard boat always got away from the vulnerable pinpoint as quickly as possible. We waited and tensely watched as they made their lumbering runs through the swells, and breathed a fervent prayer of thanksgiving when they both made it. That was the last of the daring Catalina operations in the Gulf of Siam. Miraculously, they had all gone off without a serious hitch; and though the Jap suspicions were aroused, they never actually caught us at it. Their success is a great tribute to the bravery and skill of those RAF pilots.

"**O**UR trip back to Bangkok was routine. Greenlee was glad to see me. He told me of the regal feast he had had with the underground leaders to celebrate V-E Day, which had occurred while I was in Ceylon. Roast turkey and French champagne from Indo-China had been the features. Whatever hardships went with our lonely secret life in Bangkok, lack of good eating was not one of them. Our chow couldn't have been better.

"The Siamese were delighted with the news that more arms and OSS

training teams were on the way, and shortly after my return, the air drops to our twelve guerrilla areas increased to major proportions. Things were going smoothly, and though our only escape route had been cut off with the suspension of Catalina flights, our operation seemed to be getting along famously. Then one day the Siamese told us that the Japs had reported that a B-24 had been shot down in the jungle about 150 miles northwest of Bangkok. We had been expecting an important drop that night, and when immediately afterward Headquarters informed us that the missing plane had carried a team of OSS men, we realized another crisis was upon us. Should these men fall into the hands of the Japs, the entire operation would blow up in our faces. We learned that the Japs had sent a strong patrol from their nearest garrison to look for survivors. The Chief of Police in Bangkok immediately dispatched a special police party to comb the area, and the Regent sent Siamese planes to make a search. It was a race with big stakes, and all our lives possibly hanging on the outcome.

"As we learned later, five aboard the plane were killed in the crash. There were nine survivors, of whom several were seriously wounded. The survivors started down a jungle trail. Twice they hid to avoid searching parties. They could not tell whether they were Japs or Siamese. Finally realizing that they would have to get some help for the wounded, they approached a third searching party. Fortunately it was Siamese. This group took them to a tiny jungle village, and runners were sent ahead to report to the Siamese security police.

"They were then transported to a river, and after a five-day boat trip were taken in hand by the Chief of Police's party, who spirited them into Bangkok. We visited them after their arrival. We knew that we would have to leave a minimum crew for a B-24 in the Siamese internment camp, because although the Siamese had ambushed and wiped out the Jap searching party and hidden their bodies, too many people had seen the survivors in Siamese police custody, and the Japs would certainly know of it. All Siamese prisoners had to be reported to the Japs as 'allies.' We took the most seriously wounded and all the Americans to our house, leaving four Britishers as a skeleton B-24 crew to be interned. We couldn't leave any Americans, because a mixed crew would have been more suspicious to the Japs.

"These newcomers presented a serious problem to us. In the first place five extra white men made our security problem much more difficult. Secondly, the wounded needed hospital care they couldn't get while hidden in Bangkok. They must be evacuated.

"For some time Greenlee and I had been working with the Siamese to develop an alternate route for communication with the outside world. The best possibility was a virtually isolated Siamese army airfield in the jungles of north-central Siam. A trusted underground air-force officer was sent in to command the small Siamese garrison.

"We now asked base to send a C-47 to this field to evacuate the survivors.

"**T**HERE was some delay while the Air Force made up its mind as to whether the little field was suitable for a C-47, but approval finally came, and we put the survivors in a Siamese police truck with Dr. Ekchai, and they left for the airfield. We were greatly relieved to have them out of our hide-out, but at four o'clock in the morning we were awakened by a pounding at our doors. At first we thought it might be Japs, but it was the survivors again. Their truck had broken down in the heart of Bangkok, and the five of them had spent most of the night huddled in the rear of the truck, while Jap soldiers and others had wandered past. We got them off again the next night with a spare truck as escort, and this time they reached the airfield safely and were flown back to India.

"While all this was going on, our principal work of securing intelligence on the Japanese had not been neglected. Two great breaks came our way, and Headquarters was very excited with the results. One day Colonel Samroeng, our G-2 associate who worked very closely with his Japanese opposites, was lucky enough to see a top-secret Japanese war map at their headquarters. On it were listed the names, code numbers and commanding officers of all Japanese units in Siam and Burma. He managed to memorize most of this information, and it made mighty interesting reading for Mountbatten's staff back at Ceylon. Some of the most important information discovered by Operation Ruth came from this map. For the first time we learned of a new Jap division in Indo-China and elements of several other divisions in Siam and Burma. This news was most helpful to the British and American armies battling in Burma, where identity of new Jap forces was of critical import.

"The other and even more spectacular intelligence came to us through the Siamese foreign office. Several Siamese students had just returned from Tokyo, which by now, in the early summer of 1945, was being blasted by our B-29's. These students supplied the Allied world with the first eyewitness accounts of the effects of our bombing on Japan. They told of the devastation and the highly significant fact, previously unknown, that

the people had demonstrated in front of the Emperor's palace. They also gave the first eyewitness evaluation of high explosive bombs versus fire bombs against Japanese targets.

"All this information which we radioed to base was immediately flashed to the Navy, Army, Air Force and State Department, all of whom considered it to be of the highest importance. Detailed questionnaires were sent in to us, and the Siamese officials would then interrogate these students to obtain the answers. Many of the questions dealing with details of war production and other technical subjects were beyond them; but this source was, so far as I know, the only direct news on the situation in Japan prior to the surrender that was available to our high command.

"On June 26th Major Greenlee flew back to India from our secret airfield. He had been in Bangkok since April 1st, three weeks alone, and it was thought advisable for him to get a little rest. He planned to return shortly, but unfortunately was injured in a ball game back at Headquarters, and I was left alone to carry on the mission.

"By now the British had a secret team of their own hidden out in a different part of Bangkok. Several times a week I would drive over to their quarters late at night and co-ordinate our operations. Like OSS, they had developed some guerrilla areas, manned by British training teams. These trips back and forth were really something. Everything was timed to split seconds. Siamese police, many of them in civilian clothes, were on duty at various points along the route at the precise moment my car would pass. Had any Japs interfered, they would have been eliminated immediately and their bodies hidden. The Siamese took very good care of me. For had I been caught by the Japs, there was always the chance that they could have wrung the whole story out of me. In protecting me, 'Ruth's' men were also guarding their own lives and the future of their country.

"By the first of July, the tension between the Japanese and the Siamese was getting close to the breaking-point. The Regent was fearful of an open clash with the Japanese, and made another request of the Allied command to undertake open warfare before the Japs struck the first blow. Once again he was told to wait. A number of signs convinced us that the Japs were far from asleep as to what was going on. They had a large and active secret police force, and thousands of agents. It was these and the Siamese collaborators who were our greatest danger.

"I learned that the Japs had started searching houses in Bangkok without



"One night a Japanese patrol boat stopped—it hardly seemed a coincidence."

warning. It seemed pretty definite that they suspected the presence of Allied agents, and we increased our guards. Next the Japs demanded of the Siamese permission to stop and arrest anyone on the streets of Bangkok—a most unusual request to make of an 'ally.' It was as if the U.S. forces in England had demanded such authority in London. The Siamese refused permission, and more bitterness developed.

IN spite of our repeated requests to suspend all sabotage against the Japs, many such acts took place. The Siamese people disliked the Japs intensely, and many of them took it on themselves to do something about it. For example, a station-master backed an engine with four cars of ammunition slated for the Burma front into a river. The Japs shot him, but similar spontaneous actions continued.

"One night a Japanese naval patrol boat stopped in the river just in front of our house. Our guards from the Siamese Security Police told them to get along. They then moved down the river and stopped in front of the Regent's house, and were again told to move off. It hardly seemed like a coincidence. Fortunately the Regent had not been visiting us that particular night. We wondered how much they had discovered, and again made plans to move to a new location.

"All this naturally had me pretty worried. 'Ruth', who was dealing with the Japs every day, was under a terrific strain. He never could tell for certain how much they knew of the underground, or whether they suspected him of double-crossing them. The Jap commander complained to him with such vehemence about the repeated reports of clandestine air drops that 'Ruth' ordered us to suspend them for a while. Things were getting too hot.

"Late one afternoon I received a hurried message from the Regent. He told me to be prepared to move at a moment's notice to a place of emergency refuge. The Japs had that very day just invited him and eighty per cent of the top Siamese officials to a surprise dinner party. Coupled with the invitation was a request to hold night maneuvers that very night in Bangkok. It certainly looked as though Der Tag had arrived. Everyone grimly remembered the way the Japs had taken over French Indo-China three months before. There they had invited all the top French and native officials to just such a party and then arrested them. Simultaneously they had carried out coordinated arrests of local officials all over the country.

"For some time the Siamese, on their part, had thought to open their uprising against the Japs by the same ruse. To perfect their plans and lull

the suspicions of the Japs, they had planned a rehearsal dinner and invited all the top Japanese officials to attend. Not one Jap had showed up at the dinner.

"The Regent had no good reason not to permit the holding of night maneuvers in the city, and so reluctantly he gave his permission. However, he shrewdly allowed only about half of the top Siamese officials to attend the dinner, and made sure that he and his principal underground collaborators did not attend. All over the city hidden guns were prepared for action, and the secret forces alerted to strike at the first Jap move.

"On receipt of 'Ruth's' message, I immediately packed our gear, burned all excess secret material, and waited anxiously for further news. I thought to myself: 'This certainly looks like the end of Operation Ruth.' All that evening, while the dinner was going on, I waited nervously, half expecting to have my suspicions confirmed by gunfire in the streets. The evening wore away and nothing happened.

"The next morning word came that the dinner had gone off without incident. It was a tremendous relief, but I didn't see how the clash could be postponed much longer. At best we had had only a reprieve.

"The Jap patrol boat at our pier, and various other disconcerting developments had made me very uneasy about our hide-out on the river. Our plans were still unsettled, when one day an incident happened that shocked us into an immediate departure. Our servant had been buying bananas from a little Chinese merchant who had a small store about fifty yards down the street from our house. On this particular day, he ordered several bunches, and the Chinese casually remarked to him: 'Those Americans certainly eat a lot of bananas, don't they?' Our man was too stunned to answer; he rushed home to tell me. That night we cleared out for a new location.

"To account for the activity around our headquarters, the Siamese had explained that it was an office of their Security Police Force. The same cover was used for our new hide-out which was in the beautiful palace of the Crown Prince, called Suan Kularb, Palace of the Roses. There hadn't been a crown prince for many years, and the place had seen very little recent use. Its last occupant had been the dictator and Jap collaborator, Pibul, who had been deposed by the assembly in July of 1944. The palace was an English-style house, set in beautiful grounds, well back from the street; it was ideal for our purposes.

"By now I was meeting more of the Siamese officials, all of whom knew my father. A few even remembered me. The fact that I had been born

in Siam, and my father's wonderful reputation after thirty-five years' service there, helped me immeasurably. One of the most cooperative was Supha Charasoi, Minister of the Interior. He knew me from my childhood in Bangkok, and placed the entire facilities of his department at my service. At my request his men prepared elaborate map surveys of Japanese areas, military installations and defenses. Three of his men were caught by the Japanese doing this work and were summarily shot. I sent these surveys by courier to our secret airfield in north-central Siam, where they were picked up and taken back to Headquarters.

"In mid-July, Sam Tularak, who had arrived in China in 1943 as one of 'Ruth's' original emissaries to the outside world, came in from OSS Ceylon. Sam's arrival had its share of adventure. His C-47 landed at the wrong Siamese army airfield—one where we had no underground activity. A Siamese officer told him they would have to take off immediately. In the hurry to get away, the C-47 wrecked its propeller and couldn't leave the field. It was a ticklish situation. Should the Japs discover an unarmed U.S. Army transport on a Siamese airfield, some embarrassing and dangerous explanations would be in order. Sam managed to talk the Siamese into flying him and the C-47 crew to one of our airfields. He also had the Siamese dismantle and bury the damaged C-47. After the party reached one of our airfields, they were safely flown out, and Sam was taken to Bangkok, where he made a welcome addition to our mission.

BY the end of July the situation between the Japs and Siamese had degenerated into thinly disguised enmity. The Japs were buying up all the food in the country, far beyond their normal needs. Many additional troops from their defeated armies in Burma were streaming into the kingdom, and numerous incidents of hostility had taken place. 'Ruth' had petitioned again for permission to make an open break so that he could have the advantage of surprise and beat the Japs to the punch.

"The chief of the Siamese Intelligence section at base, and Nichol Smith from Ceylon, were flown in to assess the situation and persuade the Regent to hold off a little longer for Mountbatten's Malaya offensive, due in a few months. I was extremely happy to see them—the first Americans I had talked to in six weeks.

"Nichol had the opportunity of meeting several of his Siamese students who had set out from his old headquarters in China more than a year before. It was a grand reunion. We also took a trip with a Siamese admiral

to one of our guerrilla areas and inspected the landing-points that the Siamese underground had selected for the Allied invasion in support of their revolt. Several very fruitful Intelligence sessions were arranged with Colonel Samroeng and other Siamese Intelligence sources, one of which developed information on a vital Japanese radar station. The visitors were amazed at meeting 'Ruth.' His phenomenal calm, considering the tremendous strain under which he worked in cooperating with OSS and directing a nation-wide underground movement while at the same time trying to lull the active suspicions of the Japs and seem to cooperate with them, was truly heroic. Many times his advisers had warned him that the Japs were likely to assassinate him, and he lived under the very real threat of such a fate. Yet he refused to take precautions, fearing it would make the Japs more suspicious and endanger the underground still more.

AFTER staying with me for nearly two weeks, the two men from Ceylon had completed their mission and prepared to depart about the first of August. A frantic visit from Colonel Samroeng altered their plans and convinced us that the Japs had at last discovered our activities. Our luck had finally run its course.

"The Colonel's fateful information was that the Japs had positive evidence of our air-dropping activities. They were planning an inspection of our airfields, and insisted that some Siamese accompany them. The Colonel had managed to have himself included in the inspection party and had learned of the itinerary. The Japanese list of suspected places was extremely accurate. All but two of the areas were scenes of either British or American underground activity, and most of our vital areas were included. It looked as though this was the beginning of the end, but the advance tip-off was a great break, and I immediately radioed a warning to every field station; and Brigadier Hector, my British opposite, did the same.

"There was nothing else we could do then but hope. We had no better place to go to than where we were, so I decided to stay at the Palace of the Roses. The Siamese were very depressed. For the first time in all the long months, 'Ruth' expressed great concern. More than one Siamese expected a major Jap move against the underground by the end of the week.

"As we expected, the inspection party found many evidences of our clandestine operations. Ingeniously, Samroeng and other Siamese officers had managed to hide much of the real picture of our forces, which by now numbered close to five thousand armed men. The Japs had seen more than



"As he approached the Police Chief's car, he was ordered to get in."

enough, however, to convince them that a large-scale guerrilla movement was under way.

"On their return to Bangkok they furiously confronted the Regent with the evidence. Naturally, he denied all knowledge of any Allied operations, and made the best explanations he could of our airfields. The Japs were far from convinced. Immediately they ordered troops from their nearest garrisons to converge on the clandestine dropping areas, but our men, warned in time, managed to escape capture. The Japs tortured some local natives and occupied several of our secret airfields, however, and this cut off our outside communication and our escape route. Just prior to the arrival of the Japs, the Nick Smith party had left on a special plane. Once again I was alone in Bangkok with the aroused Japs hot on my trail.

"This was the situation when I first heard news of the atom bomb. It sounded to me like just a better and bigger bomb and I didn't pay much attention, for Japan was a long way off and I had plenty of problems right in Siam. Then came the startling news of the end of the war, and the historic radio address by the Emperor of Japan. It just didn't seem possible

—I had been preparing for the worst and now everything was over!

"The Japanese in Bangkok were shocked, and there was much talk of fighting to the bitter end. The Siamese were jubilant. My instructions were to stay hidden; but a few days later I drove over to the internment camp and addressed the prisoners. They were almost hysterical. We gave them a big party, and I arranged the night evacuation of the Americans among them. It was still too dangerous for Allied planes to visit Bangkok, for Jap intentions were not clear.

"I'll never forget August 30th. That was the day when our first planes arrived openly at Don Muang, the main Bangkok airfield. Jap troops were all over the place. Jap trucks with Jap drivers were moving hundreds of their former Allied prisoners to the airfield for evacuation. It gave me tremendous satisfaction to see the tables turned so completely. After long months of living like a trapped animal, I was able to 'surface' and walk around like a free American.

"When I saw the thousands of Japs and realized the terrific odds that had been against us, Operation Ruth didn't seem possible. I suppose that's why it worked!"

THE long-prepared and tortuously hidden revolt of the Siamese underground never took place, much to the bitter disappointment of "Ruth" and other Siamese leaders who had risked their lives and their country's future trying to bring it about. That OSS Operation Ruth was a remarkable success and a great tribute to the handful of OSS men and Siamese leaders who participated, is best attested in the statement issued by Secretary of State Byrnes, August 19, 1945:

"Soon after the Japanese occupation, a Resistance Movement developed within Thailand. Our Government and the British Government have both given to and received from the Resistance Movement important aid, and for some time past have been in constant communication with its leaders.

"For a number of months the Resistance Movement has been prepared to commence overt action against the Japanese. For operational reasons this Government and the British Government requested that such action be deferred. It is only because of this express request that the Resistance Movement did not begin open fighting for the liberation of their country before Japanese surrender made such action unnecessary."

Editor's Note:

Major Nester, Major Greenlee and Captain Palmer each received the Legion of Merit for his services in Operation Ruth.



Wild Indians

In 1844 George Catlin brought a group of Indians along with his collection of Indian paintings to England. Fascinated by the works of Fenimore Cooper, the English greeted them as the original glamour boys, in a reception that is here amusingly recorded by the author of "Cavalry Mount" and "Swipsy or Sober?"

Mr. Cooper says these red men
All were daring, brave and noble,
Frank, and honest, open-hearted,
Gentlemanly, proud, and stylish;
All were tall, and straight, and handsome,
Handsome, marriageable warriors;
So that all romantic maidens,
Who read Mr. Cooper's novels,
And the song of Hiawatha,
Think how nice 'twould be to marry
With some noble Indian chieftain—
Live with him upon the prairies,
Live with him within the forest,
Sleep, at night, beside his campfire,
And have little Indian babies.

—Q. K. Philander Doesticks:*
Plu-ri-bus-tah.

DANIEL KAVANAGH was harassed. He had hardly been more harassed when the two grizzly bears in his charge broke out of their cages on the ship coming across from the United States, with a fierce storm raging. The grizzlies did plenty of roaring and rampaging, but Daniel could manage bears as well as the original of his name did lions.

Now these English here in Manchester really wore a man down with their questions—their countless, foolish questions. It was almost more than an American of Irish birth could stand, although it was part of Daniel's job as curator of the Catlin Collection† to answer questions.

On the same ship with the bears, George Catlin had brought over his paintings of Indians, along with the costumes, weapons, and other relics he had been gathering for eight years, from forty-eight tribes. The Collection, in this year of 1844, was drawing crowds at every showing. Europe's

fascinated interest in the American Indian had waxed steadily since Columbus brought back his first specimens—an interest which gripped kings and commoners equally. Good Queen Victoria had bestowed her patronage on the Catlin Collection. So had the Czar of all the Russias and wily old King Leopold of Belgium and Louis Philippe of France—who as Duke of Orleans had traveled through the United States and beheld the red men in their native haunts. Even more gratifying to George Catlin, whose portraits were as accurate in every detail as they were vivid, were the tributes of such scientists as Alexander von Humboldt.

All those questions from visitors to the exhibit were tributes too, yet they came so thick and fast all day and every day that both Catlin and his curator were on the point of exhaustion. After closing time one evening, Daniel sat down, stroked his chin whiskers and began to draw up for printing and distribution a list of answers to typical questions, a list that would save his employer's—and his—voice if not their sanity. His quill scratched busily and irascibly:

"The Americans are white, exactly the same color as the English, and they speak the same language, only they speak it a good deal better in general."

(That ought to fix the Limeys who kept asking *that!* Now for another.)

"Mr. Catlin was among the Indians eight years and was never once killed during that time."

An Irish bull that might be, yet it was a happy fact, emphasized in Daniel's mind by the artist-explorer's many narrow escapes from hostile savages, charging buffaloes, and prairie fires. How curious it was that Catlin bore only one scar and that from a tomahawk, thrown at him by a boyhood companion while they were playing



Indian! Daniel went on adding items to his list.

Don't Indians get drunk? . . . That was a favorite.

"Indians," Daniel penned on with truth and justice, "do get drunk, but whites sell them the rum."

Next Daniel, snorting with virtuous indignation, set down a series of answers to quizzings which, he declared, showed where the minds of a good many visitors were running.

"Are Indians virtuous? Yes. I should say they are quite as much as the whites, if the whites would keep away from them and let them alone.

"Or as amorous? No. Mr. Catlin says they have not the spices of life and the imagination to set them on, or I'll venture they would be quite as bad as the whites.

"Do Indians marry? Yes. They may have several wives at the same time."

"The Indians do lend their wives sometimes to white men, but it is only their old superannuated ones, who



* Pseud. of Mortimer M. Thompson.

† The truly remarkable Catlin Collection is displayed in the National Museum, Smithsonian Institute, Washington. Catlin, losing all his money in speculations, gave the Collection as security to Joseph Harrison of Philadelphia whose widow presented it to the museum.



and Wild Women

by FAIRFAX DOWNEY

Illustrated by Peter Wells

are put aside to hard labor, so it is a sort of kindness all around, and I don't see that there is much harm in it."

MUCH as Catlin relished Daniel's efforts on answers, he felt compelled to rule them out as official information. To his curator, sighing that now it would have to be "done by hand," the artist explained that the trend of the questions was undoubtedly due to the influence of the American novelist, James Fenimore Cooper, and the French writer, Chateaubriand. Their books, widely read in Europe, had invested the red man with false and romantic glamour. Women readers especially reveled in it. Oh, for a wild free life in the forest, far from dirty, crowded city or dull village, as the consort of some noble savage! Striding forth from glowing pages into receptive female imaginations, the Indian warrior, splendidly barbaric and overwhelmingly virile, appeared the answer to the maiden's—not to mention the matron's—prayer. While the American Indian had no stronger advocate and admirer than George Catlin, his rugged honesty scrupulously portrayed the red man as he was.

"Humph!" Daniel grunted when his employer had finished his explanations. "'Tis a foine thorough job thin this Mистер Cooper did. He's made the English women wild about wild Indians. 'Tis bad enough they are over your pictures, as their questions make plain. Now if they were to set eyes on real—"

A tremendous racket in the street outside their lodging-house interrupted him. A crowd had gathered. People were shouting words that sounded like "Indians! Real Indians!"

The porter, barely stopping to knock, burst in to confirm it.

"Please, sir," he gasped, "there's a h'omnibus at the door, quite full of 'orrible-looking folks—and h'I really believe they're h'Indians!"

CATLIN had received a letter from a showman named Rankin that he was bringing over a small group of

Ojibway Indians. Much as Catlin opposed taking Indians abroad on such speculative tours, he felt he could do no less than befriend them when they arrived. Accordingly he welcomed the party* consisting of an aged chieftain, a war chief, two warriors and their squaws, a young girl, and an interpreter, a tall and handsome half-breed—his father was a Frenchman—named "Strong Wind" or Cadotte. Catlin told Rankin he would allow his exhibition to serve as the setting for the Indians' performance; that he would lecture on their dances and customs, and would divide expenses and receipts.

Few more dramatic moments from a showman's viewpoint—and none more flattering to an artist—are recorded than the entrance of the Ojibways into Catlin's exhibition-hall. Wrapped in buffalo robes, wearing headdresses of eagle and wild-turkey feathers, their faces painted with streaks of vermilion, black and green, they seemed to be the very figures in the portraits, come to life and stepping out of their frames.†

To the Indians themselves the pictures were alive—or almost. They dashed around the hall, uttering ferocious war-whoops. They brandished tomahawks and scalping-knives and aimed arrows at portraits of enemy tribesmen. They offered to shake



hands with portraits of their friends, calling out "How! How!"

Promptly, Catlin, knowing Indians, swore the band to abstinence from fire-water—an oath faithfully kept except when he himself occasionally relaxed it to allow champagne or ale, downed by his protégés with gusto. The show was planned and duly staged. In full warpaint and costume the Ojibways in single file leaped onto the platform. While spectators still were shivering from their blood-curdling war cries, the Indians seated themselves in a

* Subsequently Catlin managed the English and Continental tours of two other parties of Indians: fourteen Iowas and twelve Ojibways. The former band arrived complete with papoose; the latter had one born in Paris. Shown the Foundling Hospital in Paris and told that of the 26,000 babies born in the city that year 9,000 were illegitimate, the Iowas groaned in sympathy for them. A chieftain asked Catlin why some of the thousands of French women he saw leading little dogs on strings did not get rid of the beasts and each instead take a little child and be its mother.

Indians who had toured both England and France far preferred the former. One Iowa explained it: "In London, ladies kiss 'em Indians heap. In France, ladies no kiss 'em, no like 'em—no good."

† It is interesting to speculate that Gilbert and Sullivan, using this idea effectively in *Ruddigore* forty-three years later, may have heard of the striking scene at the Catlin exhibition in Manchester.

council circle and smoked while Catlin lectured on them. They danced to the throb of drums and chanted their war songs, while the audience gaped, goggled and applauded thunderously.

On the conclusion of one dance, a man spectator, who obviously had been prompted and sharply nudged, pointed toward the dashing warrior Samah and called:

"Let that handsome little fellow come here. Here is a lady who wants to kiss him."

No sooner had this request been interpreted to him than Samah dived into the crowd as into a river. In a second he had encircled the yearning lady's neck with a coppery arm and kissed her roundly. The hall rang with feminine screams and excited gigglings. Every woman young or old, who touched Samah's arm or bare shoulder as he made his way back to the platform—and there were not a few—got a



kiss, gave a scream and presented him a ring, brooch, or other token. And there was not one who did not carry home on face or dress a streak of Samah's warpaint.

Back on the platform with his trophies, the kisser was reprimanded by Catlin.

"That was rude," he told the brave. "It is not the fashion in such crowds to kiss the ladies."

Samah grinned and replied in his own tongue: "I know what I am about. The white ladies are very pretty and very sweet, and I gave my kisses only where they were asked for."

Sensing that Samah was being scolded, members of the audience instantly spoke up for him. "He did right!" . . . "No harm done!" came shouts from all over the hall.

The latter declaration was warmly seconded by the woman who began it all.

"No harm, indeed," she asserted in a shrill and satisfied soprano. "I'll kiss him again if he will come down, the charming little fellow!"

Samah understood that one without interpretation. He had to be re-

strained from making a second and even more headlong dive.

After that performance the show—already a success—was, in the parlance of a later day, a smash hit, packing 'em in! The police were called out to control crowds. There was standing-room only and little of that when Catlin and the Ojibways moved on and toured other English cities. Audiences emerged, entertained and solidly informed on Indian lore by the lecturer and with many a woman or girl, thrilled and tittering, wearing a transposed streak of Indian warpaint like a campaign ribbon.

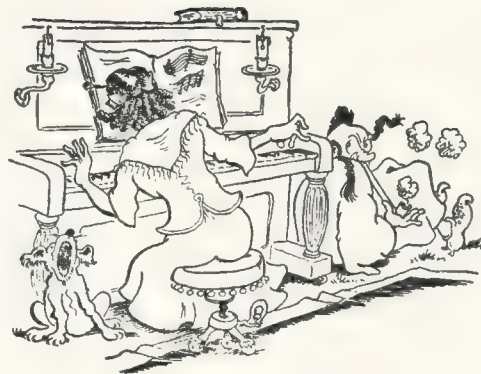
George Catlin, though he kept matters within the bounds of decorum, was worried. Several of the kissing warriors were married and, furthermore, the squaws of two of them were present during these carryings-on. However, a remark by the wife of the debonair Samah relieved him. When the other Indians began teasing her in their lodgings, that practical and confident young person was said to have replied coolly:

"The more kisses he gets from pretty woman, the more presents I get, for he loves me enough to give them to me."

IN London they opened in Egyptian Hall, repeating the successes of their triumphant tour. Gifts continued to be heaped on the Indians—jewelry, medals, money, clothing, prints of English scenes to show their tribesmen at home, hundreds of religious tracts, scores of Bibles. Everyone was delighted with them except two clergymen who visited the red men with the object of converting them. After listening respectfully to arguments, the venerable chief replied:

"My friend, we love you and give you our hands, but we wish to follow the religion of our fathers."

"A few years ago a Black Coat came among us in the town where I live and told us the same word you have spoken this morning. After awhile a great many believed him. We lifted hard on logs to put up a house for him. Many sent their children to him to learn to read. Some girls got so far



as to read the 'Good Book,' and their fathers were very proud of it.

"At last one of these girls had a baby; not long after that another had a baby. The Black Coat ran away, and we have never seen him since. My friends, we do not think this is right."

And the disconcerted dominies departed, admitting that under so unfortunate a handicap nothing could be accomplished at present. While politely accepting all proffered tracts and Bibles, the Ojibways continued to be heathen. . . .

Their every performance was enthusiastically acclaimed. But a white Eve was about to end this showman's Eden.

Catlin and Daniel had noticed the constant presence at the shows of a certain woman whom they promptly christened the "jolly fat dame." She was, she avowed to them, passionately interested in Indians and she showered all the troupe with gifts. Before long it became clear that she was interested in one Indian in particular—the fine-looking interpreter Cadotte. The jolly fat dame's pursuit was assiduous and ardent.

Daniel, indeed, described it frankly. "Sure and she's mad after him," said Daniel.

Soon Cadotte fell ill and appeared no more in the war dances at Egyptian Hall. Every day the jolly fat dame, plainly pining, inquired anxiously after him.

Catlin, who was worried also, sent his own physician to attend the interpreter.

But Cadotte's sickness was of another sort. He had fallen in love with a seventeen-year-old English girl who lived in the house next door to the Indians' lodgings—a sweet-mouthed black-eyed maiden. Combining the spell of the romantic savage with the *élan* and impetuosity in his French blood, Cadotte's courtship was irresistible.

The young girl's mother and sisters encouraged the Indian's suit, though her father opposed it, and Catlin supported this with grave words of warning. Cadotte's caste and color would

always be against him in London, the artist declared. Should the girl follow him into the wilderness of America, she would be totally lost to her family and lead a life of semi-barbarism. Excitement and novelty for a time there would be—but in the end, distress and misery.

They would not listen, the handsome Indian and the dark-eyed English maiden. And Rankin, the manager who had brought the Ojibways over and controlled them, hastened to give consent to the marriage. Here was a chance for marvelous publicity. Breaking his agreement with Catlin, Rankin took over the entire management of the Indians. He announced that he had hired coaches-and-fours to carry the bridal party to the church and a band to play. Blatantly he advertised:

"Hereafter the beautiful and interesting bride of 'Strong Wind,' the interpreter, will make her appearance on the platform with the Indians, and preside at the piano."

The press condemned the scheme. Cadotte himself refused to participate in it and he and the English girl were married quietly—whereupon Rankin discharged him, telling him to get home with his wife as best he could.



THE sequel is to be found in the newspapers, where so many stories are concluded in one way or another.

The New York *Herald*, copied by the London *Times* of November 29, 1850, printed the story mailed in by a correspondent with an eye to human interest.

On a large island off the Canadian shore of Lake Superior a great concourse of Indians had camped, pitching several thousand wigwams. One of them sheltered an English girl, wife of an Ojibway half-breed. Broken-hearted and desperately homesick she seemed, but she was apparently determined to make the best of her lot and was conducting a school for children of the Ojibway tribe.

Perhaps a few comforts sent her from home by her father had helped. Astonishingly, the wigwam was floored with a Brussels carpet and upon it, there deep in the wilds, stood a piano at which the bride of Strong Wind could still "preside."

FAMOUS INDIANS

A Quiz by Francis Drake

EVERY race has outstanding leaders of peerless character and nobility of soul. Listed below are twenty renowned Americans from the First Families, who have played a major part in shaping the destinies of our nation. Allowing yourself five points for each correct fill-in, it should not be too hard to score eighty in this game of Vanishing Americans.

1. This great Wampanoag was the best friend of the Pilgrim Fathers. A close associate of Governor Winthrop, and Roger Williams, he maintained peace and co-operation with the early colonists.

M-s-a-o-t

2. For years he carried war into the Puritan villages, until his hungry and cold troops were vanquished by the settlers, and his captured warriors sold into slavery in the West Indies.

K-n- P-i-i

3. This chief was Grand Sagamore of thirty Virginia tribes. He became a loyal friend and supporter of Captain John Smith. Best known as the father of the celebrated Indian princess, Pocahontas.

P-w-a-a

4. Believed to have held the Indian Command at Braddock's defeat, this valiant leader organized the first strategic defense of tribal lands against white aggression, capturing eight of ten enemy forts.

P-n-i-c

5. Although aligned with the British during the Revolution, this intrepid Mohawk had few equals. A learned scholar, he visited England twice and was entertained by Boswell, and by the King.

B-a-t

6. Famous for his battles against settlers in the Ohio Valley, battles provoked by squatters on Indian lands. A brilliant speaker, his war-council orations rank with those of the greatest patriots.

L-g-n

7. Warrior, general, scholar, humanitarian, history regards him as head and shoulders above his military opponents. Fighting to the last for his beloved people, he fell at the Battle of the Thames River.

T-c-m-e

8. Daring and clever aide of Tecumseh, he was always a good friend of the white settlers. During the long and dangerous border warfare he saved hundreds on both sides from extermination.

S-a-b-n

9. No craftier warrior ever fought in defense of his people. He led his troops to victory over Generals Harmar and St. Clair, to have them crushed at Fallen Timbers by "Mad Anthony" Wayne.

L-t-l- T-r-l

10. This brave Sauk Chief joined the British in 1812, because we had failed to keep our Treaty. The war that followed later, in which Abraham Lincoln was a captain, will guarantee the chief's place in history.

B-a-k H-w

11. A military genius, eloquent and courageous, who led the Creek people in many stirring engagements with our troops, until when defeated on the Tallapoosa River, he surrendered to General Jackson.

R-d E-g-e

12. Bravest of the brave, a fighting demon who successfully repulsed all attacks, from the Florida swamps of the Seminoles. Foully betrayed and captured by U. S. troops under a flag of truce.

O-c-o-a

13. An ordinary Cherokee who ranks with the wisest chiefs. He devised an alphabet which enabled thousands of Indians to read and write. Our giant redwood trees will always bear his name.

S-q-o-a

14. After outsmarting General Sheridan and sixteen thousand of his cavalry on the plains, this brilliant tactician saved his little band of Cheyenne Dog Soldiers by leading them over the Canadian Border.

L-t-l W-l

15. Surrounding Colonel Forsythe and his fifty renowned scouts at Beecher's Island on the Aricaree Fork, Colorado, he fought a desperate eight-day battle until driven off by reinforcements of cavalry.

R-m-n N-s

16. Probably the most famous of Western Indians, this Apache leader fought with the U. S. Cavalry for years, often getting the best of it. But he was finally captured in the hills of Mexico by Gen. Nelson A. Miles.

G-r-n-m

17. Perhaps the most outstanding leader of Indian armies. He ranked second in command at the Little Big Horn fight and played a tremendously vital part in wiping out the columns of Custer and Reno.

C-a-y H-r-e

18. Never a chief, but as Medicine Man he inspired and directed the Sioux War of '76. On the Little Big Horn his lieutenants officered the red hordes which perpetuated Custer's name in history.

S-t-i-g B-l

19. What a master! This Chief held off three U. S. armies on a 1500-mile front—equal to Rommel's in Africa—and he retreated without losing a man, woman or child. He was not defeated but surrendered to avoid further bloodshed.

J-s-p

Answers

1. Massasoit
2. King Philip
3. Powhatan
4. Pontiac
5. Brant
6. Logan
7. Tecumseh
8. Shabbona
9. Little Turtle
10. Black Hawk
11. Red Eagle
12. Osceola
13. Sequoia
14. Little Wolf
15. Roman Nose
16. Geronimo
17. Crazy Horse
18. Sitting Bull
19. Joseph (Nez Perces)

Jehovah's Mules

CIVILIAN clothes became Abe Tupper. He felt and looked like a dandy. When he marched with Kearny to fight for California, he had trudged; but now he pranced. He wore a beaver hat won at monte, a frock coat and cowhide vest won at faro, and a money-belt which was empty because he had lost his last cent at Crack Loo.

Inflation had gripped the country so that the men who fought under Kearny and Stockton and Fremont wondered just what they had been fighting for. But Abe Tupper had no worry, for his uncle had left him enough, so he understood from the executor's letter, to start him in some small enterprise in southern California.

The legacy was to be turned over to him by a trapper who lived in Nuestra Señora. This was a village of white-washed adobes at the end of the Spanish Trail. The villagers—plainmen, Mormons, Californians and Yankees—were called angels; for the full name of the tiny dusty sunbaked town was Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles.

Crossing the plaza, Abe turned into an alley of gaming-houses.

"It would be a good profession for me," he thought. "If the legacy is large enough, I might open up a wheel of my own. Then again, I might take to politics, or I might be a supercargo. There's a gentleman's work, buying hides from these California dons for our Yankee ships." He reached the end of the Calle de los Negros, which the Americans called Nigger Alley and found the tule shack where his uncle's partner lived.

He was distracted for the moment by a girl in tight-bodied gingham who looked out from an adobe next door. He had a feeling that he had seen her long ago when the Americans took the town from Flores and Pico. There had been some California señoritas with crow-black hair, but none with barley-gold ringlets done up in a knot on top like this girl's.

He tipped his hat, and she smiled. "Good morning, Mr. Tupper."

This was extraordinary! Could it be that the whole neighborhood had heard that Jep Tupper's nephew Abijah was coming for his inheritance? To be recognized, made him feel important, even rich. Perhaps Uncle Jeb, after giving up trapping for min-

ing, had made a fortune in the gold-washings.

"I'll see more of her," Abe said to himself as he turned toward the trapper's shack. Three mules tethered in front gave him a dead-eyed stare as he laughed at them. He laughed because having quit the Army, he was free of mules for the rest of his life.

He found his uncle's executor behind the shack, barbecuing goat's meat. Nephi Boggs was a shriveled, burned little man, rheumatic from thirty years of trapping beaver. "So you are out of the Army," he said jovially. "Where did you get the clothes?" When Abe told him, he commented: "H'm. That so? I reckon the first thing you'll do with your uncle's legacy is to put it on a wheel."

Abe had had that in mind, but he said nothing until Boggs invited him into the shack and opened a jug. The brandy which the American ships were bringing into San Pedro was better than the Valley Tan he'd drunk in Fort Jurupa. It delighted every nerve in his body. "Who's the girl next door?"

"Oh, that's Tom McVey's daughter. He's prospecting the Kern River, crazy loon! No colors down here in southern California. You got to go north. But you aren't thinking of trying your luck at the placers?"

"One out of a hundred get rich in the placers," Abe said. "The rest get cholera. Being a gambler, I like cheaper odds. What did you say the girl's name was?"

"Nanny. But let's stick to the subject. It's like you say: the ones who get rich are the merchants, sutlers and freighters, not the gold-hunters. You might take to freighting. Being in the

Army six-seven years, you know something about pack-mules."

"I wouldn't take to freighting a bit."

Boggs gave him a woeful look. "Then I reckon all I can do is to turn the legacy over to you and let you figure out what to do with it. But drink this first."

Abe drank, and Boggs motioned to the door. "There they are: Jeb left 'em to you, hoping they'd be of help to a veteran coming home to start life anew—three Mexican mules. They're yours."

"But I thought Uncle Jeb left me enough to start a business."

"Well, what's the matter with the freighting business? Mexican mules can tote three hundred pounds when an American mule only totes two hundred. They trail thirty-five miles a day, and you don't have to feed 'em grain like American hinnies. They forage for themselves all night, and come back and stand over their packs in the morning, each hinny knowing its own pack. Lots of savvy."

ABE looked through the doorway, studying his legacy, poker-faced as his custom when the wheel stopped at Double-0. He would give a slight shrug and walk out of a gaming-house, saying nothing. As he walked out of Boggs' shack toward the goose-rumped mules, he asked: "Where can I sell them?"

"Can't get much for 'em down here unless they're younger mules. They live sixteen years on the average, but these were older'n that when Jeb bought 'em a long time back. They ought to be dead, but it's like the Mexes say: a mule never dies; it just dries up."

As Abe picked up the hair ropes, each mule had a hindleg touching its sag belly, hanging free for a kick. Their dead eyes took on a glitter as they studied the half hitches this dandy was making around his arms. When the hitches were taut, they galloped off in three different directions in order to pull him apart. Abe freed himself from two ropes; and as he took in the slack of the third, the mule reached for his hat and chewed it, then chewed his shoulder. The other two chewed the vegetables in the patch next door and pawed away like dogs that had buried bones.

THE TOWNSFOLK OF OLD LOS ANGELES HAD OTHER NAMES FOR THEM; SO TOO DID THE YOUNG TRAVELER FROM THE EAST WHEN HE FOUND THAT HE OWNED THEM.

by KENNETH
PERKINS

A neighbor shouted: "Nanny—they're doing it again!" More neighbors came from shacks, throwing stones. Nanny McVey came out of her shack with a broom. Abe untangled himself from the hair ropes and stared, for she was close enough now, so that he could see her blue eyes and the gold freckles on her chin.

"I remember those freckles," he said, forgetting his legacy entirely. The three mules, under a spanking of cactus-pads, bolted up the Calle de los Negros toward the plaza. A neighbor came out of his shack with a shotgun. "I told you what I'd do the next time this happened, Nephi Boggs. There's going to be three dead mules, maybe four, counting you!"

"They aren't my responsibility any more," Boggs said. "Jeb Tupper bequeathed 'em to his nephew. I never even owned 'em. I was just holding 'em in trust."

ONE man, long-boned, with sleeves rolled up over hairy arms, stepped from the circle of neighbors. In a gentle voice he said: "Do I understand, friend, that Jeb Tupper left you these mules?"

Abe swallowed, knowing that the gentle voice was a delusion.

"It's like this, friend: if he made a will, maybe he put in the customary wish that his just debts be paid. Here's a bill for shoeing. I shoed 'em five nails all around, same as cavalry, account these Mexican mules have long hoofs."

"And nails worth more than silver in this country," somebody put in.

Abe threw up his hands. "Take the mules, and the nails, and the shoes, and the whole works. You're welcome to them."

"If they were horses, yes. Burros, yes. American mules, yes. But Mexican mules—I'll take cash, friend."

Abe had a good answer for this, but for the moment everyone's attention was distracted by a hullabaloo in the plaza. The three hinnies on the loose had headed straight for a bell-mare leading a pack-train into town. Half of the pack-mules broke from the line of march and crowded around the three intruders, biting and fore-striking like wild stallions in a love fight. Abe's three mules, although fighting fifty, seemed to be winning, for the pack-mules were laden with wheat and hides. The Mexican drivers charged in on ponies, and warped the tangled herd in a definite direction, but this merely made them bolt.

A stagecoach coming down from the Street of Grasshoppers swerved to avoid the stampede; a wheel-horse jumped the traces; the lead team buck-jumped, swinging the stage against a water-trough. The passengers, most of them women, piled out screaming. Everyone came to the doors of saloons,



Voices began to shout: "Who owns those mules?"

bowling alleys, billiard-halls—from the Bella Union, Gibson's casino, Taos'. They gathered around the coach and helped the women pick up carpet-bags and hat-boxes. The women with their tossing feathers and billowing silks and bustles frightened Abe Tupper. Their faces were painted, the rouge a bit too gaudy for the southern California sunlight. They were terrifying, and their anger infected the rougher angels of Nuestra Señora. Voices began to shout the one question: "Who owns those mules?"

Abe owned only three of them, but he had the conviction that his uncle had left him a Pandora's box, and that he had opened the lid. He wondered how he could leave town without these neighbors and the smith stopping him. When the uproar in the plaza reached its climax, he felt a hand slip into his. "Better come into my shack until the dust clears."

Nanny led the way, for he was in a daze. "Sit down, Mr. Tupper."

She took his hat and helped him off with his coat, then got some powdered rosin and spider-web to smear over the bruises where the mule had chewed him.

"I've seen you before somewhere," he said. "You used spider-webs some time in the past. But where?"

He studied the gold freckles as she stood over him. He had dreamed of a girl just like her on those nights when he marched with Kearny and Kit Carson and those saints from the Mormon Battalion.

"Where was it I saw you?"

Voices outside the shack echoed him. "Where?" "Ducked into Boggs' shack!" "But he's not here! Where'd he go—the man who owns those mules?"

Nanny went to the door to listen. It seemed that Abe's mules had bumped into a historical incident.

That was the year, remembered by our forefathers, when Los Angeles imported a party of San Francisco ladies for a dance-hall on upper Main Street. The good element in the town had sworn to give them a hot reception. But the gamblers, saloon-men and Chaguanosos of the Spanish trail had sworn to protect them from any affront.

Nanny explained this to Abe.

"They think you stampeded their coach on purpose. You see, you're the only good element in town."

Abe jumped up, but she said calmly: "You'd best stay here for a long time." He settled back again comfortably, his face turned up, his soul feasting on those gold freckles and that barley-colored hair; but then he jumped again when someone pounded on the door.

"Hide in here!" Nanny pulled him into the lean-to bedroom.



*"Hide in here! Get in the bunk!"
Nanny pulled the blanket over him.*

"He's in Nanny McVey's shack!" a voice shouted. "The Mexican saw him." There was a clatter of hob-nailed boots.

"Get in the bunk." When Nanny pulled a blanket over him, Abe had the answer to the question that had been badgering him. She had tucked him into a bunk just like this once before!

She had fed him hot sling, and she had cleaned his wounds with vinegar and gunpowder. That was right after Kearny's exhausted men met General Flores at San Gabriel River. He had got the wounds before that, at San Pascal when they fought Pico; and the long march up from San Diego had brought on a fever. He was in bed in his uncle's shack for days, nursed by a long-legged girl of twelve with a face a mass of freckles. Now the freckles that were left were beauty-spots on Nanny's chin.

She was laughing at the crowd. "Why, of course you can take a look in here. But if you really want to know where he is, I'll tell you. I saw him sneaking behind the shacks running to the Eldorado."

It was just what the crowd could believe, for the Eldorado billiard-hall had been turned into a church that year by the Reverend Bland. And the Reverend was the one who had sworn to kick the 'Frisco ladies out of town.

AS the searchers trooped off, Nanny ran into the bedroom and lifted the corner of the blanket. "You won't be safe out in the streets. It's a bad town. It's only a little village, but there are four hundred professional gamblers who'll try to fleece you. Not to mention Pico's desperadoes and Murietta's bunch. You best be careful with all that money in your belt."

Abe was going to ask, "What money?" but he listened to her fervent voice, delighted.

"Everyone from South America and Mexico stops here on the way to the gold placers, and when the Vigilantes kick them out, they come down south to live. Los Angeles is the toughest town in the West, worse than San Francisco itself. You must be careful, or you'll lose everything your uncle left you."

"I already lost it," Abe laughed, "—for which I thank Providence."

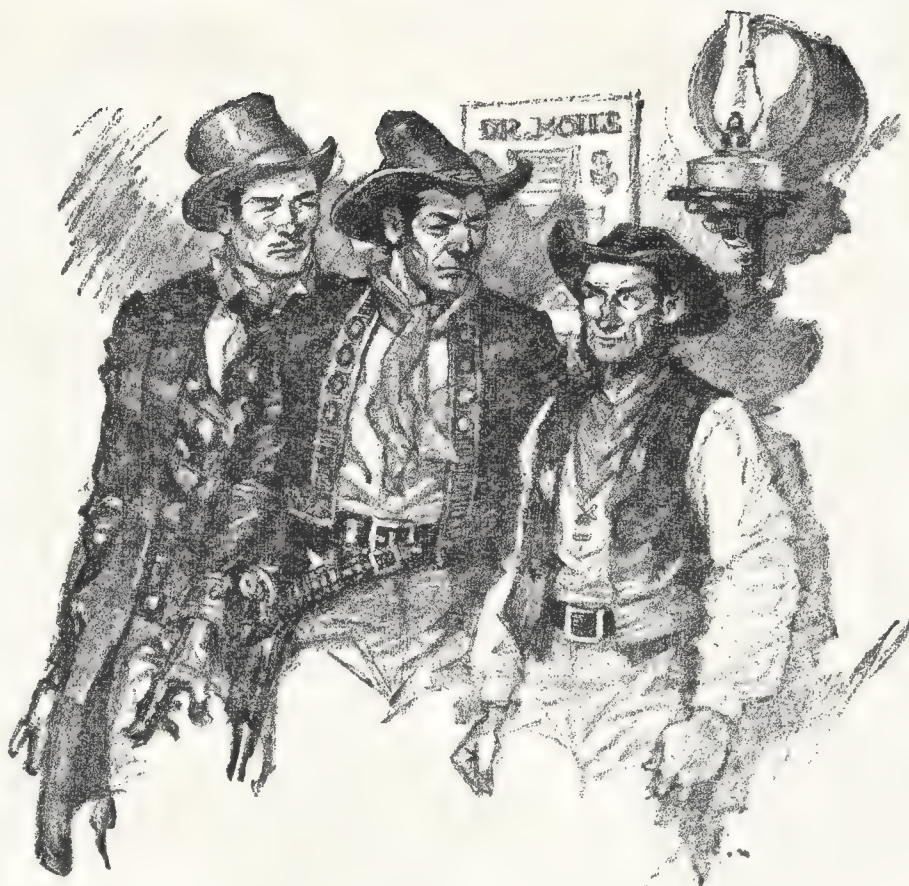
"You lost your octagonals!"

"My what?"

"The forty octagonals your uncle left you."

Abe started to laugh, then stared at her. "You mean Boggs is holding out two thousand dollars!"

She stared back. "Oh, I see. He didn't give you the money. Well, that's a relief. He thought you would gamble it, I reckon. That was in the will: you were not to gamble it."



"I can sell 'em at double the price," Boggs said.
"I figured on that when I bought 'em."

Abe was putting on his coat. "Sol Holding out forty gold slugs! That little two-spot crook! I'll pull off his ears!"

"Wait, Mr. Tupper! He wasn't holding it out, as you call it. He was to invest it, your uncle said. That's how I heard all about it. Boggs asked my dad's advice, and he asked Mayor Hodges and Kit Carson. It wasn't enough to start you in business unless he invested it in just the right spot—maybe the freighting business."

"If he talks freighting to me again, I'll pull off his hairy ears," Abe said, and added as he went to the door: "I'm going to pull 'em off anyway."

But when he ran into the shack next door, he found it empty. Boggs had either followed the crowd to the plaza or else skipped town. In either case Abe could not chase him, for as he stepped out of Boggs' shack, a rider came charging down on him. He was a splendid figure in vicuña hat, embroidered jacket, tight-fitting pants—one of Cap Hope's Los Angeles Rangers.

"Where you going, pilgrim?"

"To find Nephi Boggs."

"Figure on leaving your hinnies loose in the streets to start another riot?"

"I'm donating them to the town," Abe said readily. "You can sell 'em and pay for damages."

"You can't get out of your responsibility that easy. There's not a man in town would buy them after what happened to that stage. You better come along with me, Tupper."

"You mean you're arresting me just for owning three mules!"

"No—although you'd be safer in jail, at that!" the ranger said, nodding to the adobe on Gallows Hill. "I'm taking you to the Bella Union. O'Lynn's hiding there. He owns that pack-train, and knows the town's fixing to tar and feather him. Are you going to leave him holding the bag?"

Abe saw this point. "I'll explain to the town it was an accident."

"And who's to blame? O'Lynn recognized the three strays that stampered his string, and he said they belonged to Nephi Boggs. You letting Boggs hold the bag too?"

"He's holding a bag of gold slugs my uncle left me," Abe said hotly. "Instead of giving it up, he sawed off three mules on me!"

The ranger's gaze was hard.

"You're changing the subject. We'll straighten it all out at the Bella Union. Let's get going, Tupper."

"I got to find Boggs first!"

"He's at the Bella Union, hiding from the crowd, same as O'Lynn."

When they passed the shack next door, Nanny ran out and asked anxiously: "Where are you taking him,



Lieutenant?" When the ranger told her, she said: "I'm going with you."

"Better stay out of this, Miss McVey," the ranger said. "You see, it's a matter of politics. A mix-up regarding some 'Frisco ladies and a parcel of mules. It's not a game for you to mix in."

She ran into her shack, took off her apron, put on a poke bonnet. "I said I'm going with you." She slipped her arm into Abe's.

THE Bella Union was the natural place to straighten out the affair of the 'Frisco ladies, for it was the political center of Los Angeles. The District Court sat there, and one of the proprietors of the flat-roofed adobe was Mayor Hodges himself. That perhaps was the reason that O'Lynn and Nephi Boggs had gone there for sanctuary.

Walking his horse on one side of Abe while the girl walked on the other, the ranger skirted the back cor-

As a sergeant of Artillery in World War I, Mr. Sisley acquired a certain distaste for the society of mules which forbade him to depict them with the loving and sympathetic touch this story requires; hence the assist by Mr. Gustavson on the next picture.

ral. But when they reached Commercial Street, Abe heard the nimble *clip-clop* of hoofs behind him and turned to see the smith driving three grinning, hip-slung flop-eared mules.

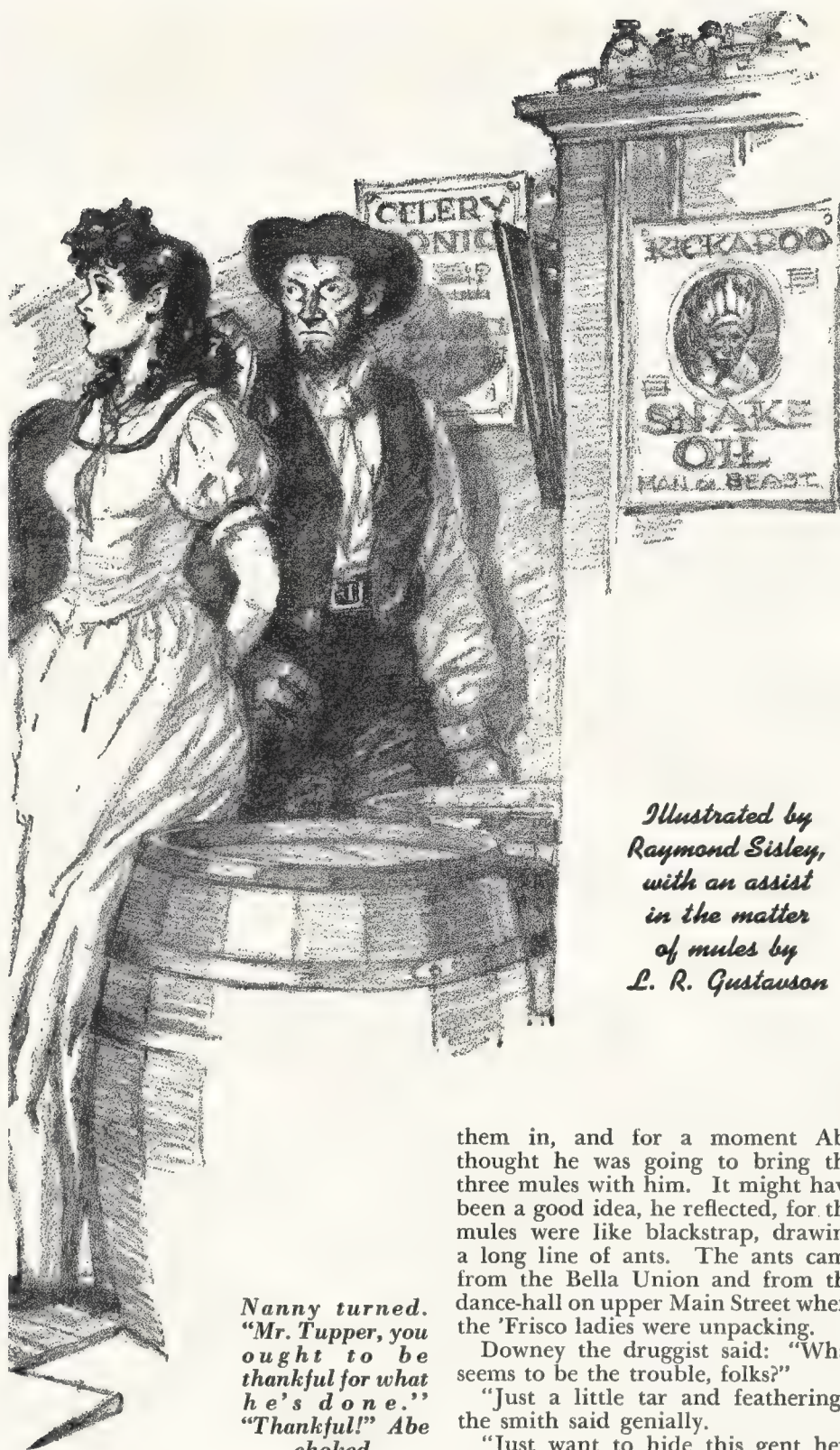
"Hi, Lieutenant! Here's the man-killers you told me to round up. They're his—Abe Tupper's."

Abe felt that these mules were going to be a millstone around his neck until they dried up and died. "Quit follow-

ing me around!" he said to the smith; then with a sudden forlorn hope: "They're not my mules, anyway. You've got the wrong ones. I never saw 'em before."

"Bring 'em along," the ranger said confidently. "I'll look up their brands in the *Libro de Fierros*."

A small group of angels loitering at the corner of Commercial and Los Angeles Streets saw this curious mix-



*Illustrated by
Raymond Sisley,
with an assist
in the matter
of mules by
L. R. Gustauson*

*Nanny turned.
"Mr. Tupper, you
ought to be
thankful for what
he's done."
"Thankful!" Abe
choked.*

ture—the man in the beaver hat, the girl in the poke bonnet, the ranger and the smith with three mules racking along behind them. Somebody ran off to tell the crowd in front of the Bella Union.

The ranger saw the crowd and heard the triumphant shouts. He shoved Abe and the girl into the first door he could reach—the door of Downey's apothecary shop. The smith followed

them in, and for a moment Abe thought he was going to bring the three mules with him. It might have been a good idea, he reflected, for the mules were like blackstrap, drawing a long line of ants. The ants came from the Bella Union and from the dance-hall on upper Main Street where the 'Frisco ladies were unpacking.

Downey the druggist said: "What seems to be the trouble, folks?"

"Just a little tar and feathering," the smith said genially.

"Just want to hide this gent here until the dust clears," said the ranger.

Nanny told him much more. "He just came in from Fort Jurupa today. He got out of the Army, and never saw these mules in his life."

"Or the 'Frisco ladies either," Abe said.

The druggist looked puzzled. "But I thought you and O'Lynn and Reverend Bland cooked it all up—trying to stampede those ladies out of town."

Abe and Nanny looked at each other. Nanny sank to a chair. "You

mean that stampede—it wasn't an accident after all!"

The ranger was equally flabbergasted. "Why, I thought it was the three strays belonging to this gent that started the bolting! But you say Bland and O'Lynn—"

"They fixed it so O'Lynn would bring his string of mules in town right when the stage came from San Pedro. I knew about it ahead of time, and now the Reverend's been spouting it on street-corners. He said the mules were sent by Jehovah, and he's warning the 'Frisco hussies to lock up their Main Street place or the mules will be after them again."

"No wonder the town's lynch mad!" the ranger said seriously.

The smith said: "This game's too steep for me!" He fled through the back door. Evidently part of the crowd had circled the store to guard that exit, for Abe could hear the smith pleading with them.

The ranger said: "I'll get Cap Hope. Mr. Downey, you're a good speech-maker. Tell that gang of hooligans the boy's innocent."

DRUGGIST DOWNEY went out and made a persuasive speech. Why, he asked, did they want to tar and feather a young veteran of the Mexican War? Why pick on this ex-soldier trying to start life anew in a country where a pill or purge cost ten dollars without advice and thirty dollars with? Why persecute a youth who had helped win this Golden State on a private's pay of ten dollars a month?

The angels stopped throwing stones and listened, for Druggist Downey knew how to bind a spell. In fact, it was this same gift which not long thereafter made him the Governor of California.

"Why, all this veteran has in the world," he orated, "are those *macho* mules. And they aren't Jehovah's mules! Ask the Reverend Bland. He's a fair man. He'll give credit where it's due. The man you want—I'm mentioning no names—owns fifty mules, not just three."

The crowd of angels yelled: "Who owns the fifty?"

Everyone started shouting at once: "Here's the pack-train heading this way! Here they come—Jehovah's mules! Ask the driver who owns 'em!"

Abe and the girl ran to the door. From the back of the Bella Union a herd of hinnies smoked up the dust of Los Angeles Street, their Mexican packers shouting, "*Hippa! Mula! Anda!*" A crowd of Angelenos followed, throwing stones and bottles, which the mules received in a stubborn sort of martyrdom. Blows were mother's milk to them. Unlike horses, they flexed their muscles, absorbing the force of the punishment as mules will. They neither slackened nor



quicken their pace, but came ambling along, apparently laughing.

As the drivers crowded them up to the three hinnies at the hitch-rail, a small leathery man popped out of the dust-cloud.

Abe opened the door, dashed into the milling jam and collared Nephi Boggs.

"Where's my forty slugs, you little wart?"

"Invested it," Boggs gave a dusty tobacco-juice smile. "I got this whole outfit for next to nothing. O'Lynn was scared of the mob, so he unloaded, account of what happened to that stagecoach."

"You mean I own fifty mules!"

"Fifty, and the pads and aparejos and cinchas thrown in. Here's the bill-of-sale. You're in the freighting business!"

Luckily the crowd neither saw nor heard what was going on, for Abe had mules in front of him and behind him and on both sides heaving against him. He found himself in a vortex of hoofs, of wagging ears and grinning lips and bared teeth. It was a nightmare. His head reeled; his lungs cramped with dust. He was only vaguely aware of the two Mexican drivers now worming their way into the vortex and facing him.

"If you are the new owner, señor, command us! But we will not drive this herd while everyone throws stones. Nevertheless if you pay us our wages in advance—"

"He'll pay you!" Boggs shouted. "I got two slugs left—but don't let 'em stampede again!" He shouted this as Abe was fighting his way back to the hitch-rail, dragging Boggs with him. When he got into the shop, Nanny slammed the door, and Abe felt as if he were in a vacuum. A mule must have kicked the wind out of him although he did not know it until he slumped on a barrel while the druggist handed him whisky. Abe took it with one hand and held Boggs with the other.

Nanny was at the window trying to make out what the crowd was doing. Most of the angels were busy pelting mules while the ringleaders were shouting at the Mexican packers: "If O'Lynn doesn't own this string, then who does?"

Apparently the Mexicans were vague in their answers, for the crowd made no attempt to break into the store—at least not for the moment.

Nanny turned from the window. "Mr. Tupper, you stop shaking poor little Boggs. You ought to be thankful for what he's done."

"Thankful!" Abe choked. "Owning three mules pretty near got me lynched, and he's spent my legacy for fifty more!"

"Now, listen, Abe," Boggs pleaded. "You can't be a freighter with just three mules. It takes fifty to make an average pack-train. With freight a dollar a pound for a hundred miles, and a Mexican mule toting three hundred pounds, you'll be rich."

"If he isn't lynched!" the druggist put in. "There's no freighting in southern California, anyway. O'Lynn freighted for the Mormons, and can't even pay his packers." He turned to the window. "Here comes the angels with a cedar pole!"

Boggs lowered his voice. "Abe, I'm telling you something: There's going to be plenty of freighting in southern California! They've discovered colors on the Kern River!"

"Kern River!" Abe said, trying to shake himself awake. "Who told you that?"

"Nanny McVey."

"My father sent a Cahuilla to tell me," Nanny said. "Of course, it may be only a pocket, and it may be the Mother Lode. It may mean a rush, bigger than any up north."



They galloped off in three different directions in order to pull him apart.

"And the Kern River mountains are steep trailing," Boggs added. "Can't use ox-teams. Got to use mules." A loud banging at the back door drowned him out. The druggist opened it to admit the ranger.

"Too late to find Cap Hope." The ranger looked around at the frightened group—the girl, the druggist, Abe, Boggs. He picked out Boggs. "One of those packers told me you bought that whole string from O'Lynn. Is that true?"

Boggs started to nod, his head hanging. "I bought 'em, but not for myself."

"Well, who owns 'em?" the ranger roared.

"I do," Abe said.

The ranger gaped at him. "And you even admit it?"

"He's in the freighting business," Boggs explained. "He's going to be a freighter."

"Lucky for you that bunch of 'breeds and angels don't know it yet," the ranger said. "There's still a chance to get you out of town. You can take my horse. I'll get another and escort you as far as San Gabriel."

ABE glanced to the street, where the hinnies for some perverse reason had quieted. They suffered patiently under the hail of stones and bottles. They stood droop-lipped and doddering, resigned to the misery of all Mexican mules since the days of Cortez when the breed began. They had

many faults, except the one fault for which they were being persecuted: Like Abe himself they were innocent. He sympathized with them, and for the first time he saw life from their point of view.

"If I back out," he said, "what's going to happen to my mules?"

"In a week I can sell 'em at double the price," Boggs answered. "I figured on that when I bought them. I can't force you to be a freighter. It's up to you."

"Double the price!" Abe exclaimed as the ranger took his arm and led him to the back door. "I'd have eighty octagonals! I could open a wheel at the first gold-camp. I could follow the miners in. I'd be riding high!"

"Then I won't ever see you again?" Nanny asked.

Abe shook off the ranger and looked at her. "But if I don't sell my mules—if I keep 'em and start a business of my own—"

"Make this fast, Tupper. What's the matter with you?" the ranger barked. "Are you coming or not?"

"I'm coming, but I'm taking my pack-train with me."

"Man, are you crazy! They'll ride you out on a rail. And there's too many bystanders for me to try any gunplay."

"Let 'em ride me out of town. But my mules go with me."

The ranger gave up. "It'll mean peace, anyway," he said. "You've caused enough civil war; but you

understand as long as they don't talk lynch, I'm not mixing in."

"That satisfies me." Abe looked at Nanny. "I'll see you when the dust clears." Then he walked out to the street. He walked feeling the inspiration of a soldier going in to battle.

He knocked several men down while Druggist Downey shouted: "Listen now, gentlemen! You want to run him out of town, and you want to run his mules out with him. He's willing, so let him get a horse—"

"What's he want of a horse?" the crowd hooted as a dozen men shoved through the herd with a cedar pole. They jumped him and tied his arms. They ordered the *muleros* to get the pack-train started. They put Abe on a rail and rode him on the run with the herd jam-packed around him.

The ranger and the druggist watched from the store. The rest of the good element in town ducked into doorways and watched passively. All except one. By the time the procession reached the plaza, Nanny was at Abe's side.

The rail-bearers began to sweat. They had to blink their eyes and wipe their mouths in embarrassment. They had expected a good street fight with the reformers of Nuestra Señora, but they found they were championing the 'Frisco ladies against only one adversary—a lone young girl in gingham and poke bonnet.

THE hooting of the saloon angels was hollow in their throats. The Spanish Californians called out: "Don't hit the señorita! Hit the mules!" One by one the rail-bearers dropped out.

No one stopped Nanny when she unbound Abe's arms. As he slipped from the rail and started staggering along, one of the gamblers called: "If he's on his way, men, let him go—so long as he takes his mules with him!"

Abe walked on, with Nanny's arm hooked in his. It was only a short distance to the creek wash at the end of town, but he knew it was the start of a long trail. He quickened his pace, his muscles tightening against hers. Mules surrounded them on every side, close-herded and churning dust, but Abe breathed deep as if the dust were the pure air of the Kern River cañons. Although he had been kicked out of town with all that he possessed in the world, he walked in triumph.

Nanny knew the triumph of it; and so did old Boggs, watching from under a pepperwood in the plaza. No one else in Nuestra Señora knew that southern California was to have a gold-rush—perhaps the biggest of them all, but Abe felt it in his bones:

He was on the trail that would lead in time to the gold and glory of Whisky Flats.



"They're dropping stuff on us! It's here that they're coming down!" Kelly found himself shouting, as he ran down the slope.

TOO OLD OR TOO YOUNG FOR COMBAT, THE BATTLE NONE THE LESS CAME TO THEM ON THE LAST DAY AT OKINAWA. . . . A NOVELETTE SUCH AS ONLY A PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER LIKE COLONEL CLIFFORD COULD WRITE,

*Illustrated by
John McDermott*

THE REPLACEMENT DEPOT COMMANDER watched the little man walk away. His eyes followed the strange figure down the slope, through the tents and on out toward the saucerlike grass-grown depression beyond. There was a low ridge beyond that; and over the ridge the sea went flat, then seemed to bulge up to the coloring western sky. Hundreds of ships lay out there, their noses sticking hard up into the tide. The brutal Okinawa heat still shimmered, and the sun lay red and sullen and hard under the thin film of colored cloud.

The Colonel reached for a Jap canteen hanging on the tent-pole and dragged from it.

The medical officer said, jerking his shoulder toward the distant figure walking through the tent line:

"What's the pitch on that?"

"The pitch on that," said the Colonel, "is Master Sergeant Francis J. Kelly. Sergeant Kelly is a Gold Star father. Poor old devil!" He waved a thin brown hand.

"You see those tanks out there?"

There were some twenty rusting and torn medium tanks, grass-grown, spread drunkenly about the depression.

"One Jap gun did that," the M. O. said. "Up there by the culvert on the road, wasn't it?"

"It was. It let them go by, then it would slip out on tracks and—*wham!* One was the Lillie Mae. I had a hell of a time running that data all down."

"Why should you?"

The Colonel motioned toward an envelope that lay on his soiled O.D. bed blanket.

"That letter's from the Commanding General himself. Seems he and friend Kelly almost started together in the old Cavalry. He directed that every facility be made available. Every effort to locate the place where Kelly's boy died. It was a big job; the end of a corporal on that mad terrain." He waved his hand, at the surrounding shell-torn ridges. "Thousands of them died right there, Bill."

The M. O. nodded solemnly. "And a hell of a place to put a camp, if you ask me."

I Pledge Allegiance

by CHARLES L. CLIFFORD

"I don't mind that part. Harden these replacements for what's coming. Well, I found young Kelly died in the driver's seat of the Lillie Mae. Can't see it from here; mess tent's in the way. Direct hit, all killed. But he's buried properly enough in the Tenth Army cemetery. Not too far from General Buckner. The old man was quite proud of that."

"He saw it?"

"I took him over yesterday. Right after he came in."

"Sad, I suppose?"

The Colonel looked off toward the sea.

"So he saw the grave?" the M. O. prompted.

"He looked at me with those funny Irish eyes. 'Where they bury them doesn't mean anything,' he said. 'I'd like to see the place my boy died. Died gloriously.'"

"Well?"

"There was meaning in that. Quiet, you understand, but fight in those eyes. I didn't get it at first. I'd already checked and found a lieutenant who'd been there, and he said in the excitement he couldn't see much. His own tank went out. But he thought every man in Kelly's tank got it."

"Why the fight in his eyes? Didn't he believe it?"

"Yes. But there was no decoration on record. Not even a Purple Heart for his boy."

"Well, that's automatic. Posthumously, of course, in his case."

"Well, there was nothing on the record. I talked to him last night, and he brought it up quietly. They'd given others a Bronze Star for 'long hours, faithful attention to duty' back on Oahu. But his boy, who died driving a tank on Okinawa, got nothing, see?"

"Yes," the M. O. said. "So he's gone out there now to look at the tank?"

The Colonel nodded.

"Maybe he'll find something, something of the boy's."

"I doubt it. You know how these kids of ours have gone all over everything. Worries me, the way they roam around here. I just can't seem to impress them with the fact that there are thousands of armed Japs at large.

Moving north in swarms every night. Infesting every place they can pick up some chow. Look at the casualties we've had since the Island was said to be secure. Hell, they fight to go on perimeter at night, and on day patrols. I hope to hell the Divisions call for them soon. They're getting hard to hold."

"The under-nineteens are the worst," the M. O. agreed.

The Colonel nodded. "Every day we catch a couple of them trying to slip in with a patrol. And you know what it means to me if one of them gets killed. Right from the War Department, that order is. No combat duty for under-nineteens."

MASTER SERGEANT KELLY found the Lillie Mae. She was on a small rise, and on her side. The other side, most of it, and all the top had been blown out by a direct hit.

Sergeant Kelly was a small man, and he was well on his way to prove the old Army slogan: Old soldiers never die; they just dry up and blow away. Looking at him standing there, his dim old eyes staring up at the Lillie Mae, you wouldn't bet that a good twenty-knot breeze wouldn't blow him away. He wore all the warlike habiliments prescribed for the forward areas. Very consciously he had done that before he took the plane from peaceful Oahu. On his small gray head was a huge helmet that gave him a gnome-like rather than martial look. He had taken advantage of local rules and wore a khaki shirt without tie or lower sleeves; a pair of improvised shorts hung low on his bony, bowed legs.

Sergeant Kelly had found it necessary to take up the web pistol belt to the last hold. In spite of that, it sagged like a pirate belt. The automatic pistol looked like a cannon on his hip, its balancing trench-knife like a cutlass.

Kelly looked up at the Lillie Mae, then around at the dozen or more other disabled tanks. Some were mere junk, others almost intact except for the rust and weeds upon them. He looked at the battle-scarred ridge, the Objective, and pride welled up in his old heart.

"They made it the closest, anyway," he whispered. "Freddy got as far as they went."

He stepped closer himself, took hold of torn, out-thrust steel. He tried to spring lightly, in a soldierly manner, into the forepart of the tank, but he stumbled, scraped his bare knee, and his breath was coming short as he got onto the floor-plates. He hoped nobody had seen him, seen an old monkey-drill cavalryman stumble so on a mere tank. But there seemed to be no one about; the nearest soldiers were playing ball in an old cane-field some distance away.

Kelly stared down at the driver's seat. It was still there, twisted a little, and at this strange angle.

"Freddy's seat," he said in that strange new whisper that had come here with him. "Freddy sat there, training and all. And he worked them levers. All them important, damned important instruments. . . . And the gun there. . . . A mean-looking baby. Freddy could work that, too. They told me back there all the boys was a team. All could do the different jobs. So Freddy, maybe, shot that gun. But the big job was driving; driving her into battle."

Kelly looked again at the bare knife-edged ridge that the Lillie Mae had never reached, and he felt his eyes misting. He brushed a thin hand across his face and blew his breath out.

"They was up there—thousands of them vicious little yellow-bellies. Dug in good. Looking down the throats of decent boys, with their knee mortars and their hundreds of machine-guns and what-all."

He swept his eyes toward the road, and he saw what the Colonel had pointed out to him only this morning in the jeep.

"And there's the dirty gun that done it; still sittin' up there, alive, and Freddy and the rest gone. Why don't they blow it up? Why don't they blast the dirty thing?"

He looked down at the seat, and his eyes went around the rusty interior of the tank. He was thinking: "I'm a soldier; better, I'm a cavalryman. Forty years of it. And onto that, I'm a Kelly. I can take it."



"You want to bet I don't get in a fight right here—on this Okinawa Island?"

So he looked hard around the dim interior, but he saw no signs of blood or other results of the horror of that direct hit. The rain and wind and dust and the wandering replacement boys had taken all evidence. But the dust was benign, softly it covered the ugliness, and at last Kelly slid into the seat.

"I'm sitting here now where little Freddy sat." And he thought back to the years past, though not so distant. Freddy was only eighteen and three months when he died.

"Upped his age a bit, as I done myself. As a Kelly should do, when it's war. Sure, the Captain laid hand on him that day of the christening in the Chapel at Clark. Said he: 'Tis a fine recruit for the regiment this day, and here's his service record, signed and sealed.'"

In his worn wallet with his identification card and other fantasies one had to carry in this modern war, the "service record," faded with age, still rested secure. He remembered that now, and touched it with a loving finger. He sighed deeply, and his eyes went over the far sea with its hundreds of ships. His old eyes gleamed, and there was a tightness in his throat as he saw three fighter planes race by between him and the sun.

"We'll fix 'em for you yet, Freddy! If only I could be in one of them things! It takes but a finger on the gun, and I've got that, I have!" His fingers tightened like fighting claws, and then the breath seemed to go from him, and he felt suddenly weak and

old. All his long service it had been the same, just as it was now. Around him were others who did the fighting. With the fight boiling in him, they thrust him aside and sent the others.

It had always been the same. . . .

"Some sin I committed, mortal to the hilt, I must've forgot to confess."

He thought back now, desperately trying to place it. Many a time he'd done that, and never with success. Sitting here in the seat where his boy had died, he tried it hard, with deep and searching honesty.

IT couldn't be the enlisting lie: God forgave you for that, for Chaplain Brophy had said that to his face right on the picket-line.

But he had lied. Eighteen was the age, and he was only a bare sixteen. And small at that. But he had a good cavalryman's build, and they wanted cavalry badly for the Border. And there was some trouble in Cuba. But he didn't go there with the others. He went with a monkey-drill team as an adjunct to Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. When the men had been picked from the regiment, the top sergeant, Feeny, had said to the Captain: "This kid's a leppin' fool, sir. He could do the under-and-over on elephants; why, he could Roman Ride a pair of giraffes."

It was the same when the Mexican trouble came up. This time they sent him to the Exposition in Frisco. Jumping around on barebacked horses like popcorn in a pan. So he missed that.

He was even at Columbus at the time when Villa swept across the Line and burned and ravaged. But he didn't go in with the others of the expeditionary force, even though he'd stood up to the Captain with bitter argument. His eyes were like hot pin-wheels, they said, those that had seen it through the orderly-room window.

"Twicet, now, I've missed it!"

"We need you for training re-mounts. Anybody can ride them, Kelly."

"But not *fight* them. It's fightin' I'm talking about. They ask for volunteers for replacements for the Sixth in the Philippines, and me name's put in before the echo dies down. No, says they, it's train horses, Kelly."

"I know nothing of that."

"Next it's Cuba; you're too good a man with a horse, Kelly, says they."

"There was no fighting in Cuba. It was just pacification."

"Now it's this: A bandit comes killing and burning, and away they all go after him. Kids hardly got their hand down from swearing in. But it's Kelly train horses again."

And it was indeed, for they never sent him in.

And then the big war. They fed them on false hopes, those border cavalry regiments. Rumors flew. "We're going next week. Embark at Galveston. The Colonel's dog-robber heard it at dinner."

Or: "General Pershing said if he only had even a regiment of cav'lry, he'd've cleaned up. We're on our way, boys. Hell, aint he a cav'lryman?"

But they never did.

And now this one: Would he ever forget that Sunday? The quick nimble legs had long grown tired. But the training center at Ft. Riley had a place for Sergeant Kelly. There'd always be a place for him there. With no education to begin with, he had developed through his long years that crafty way of knowing what was right and what was wrong in the Army. They put him on a supply job, and he had smart-enough high-school boys to do the fancy paper work—the typing and all. But he knew all the tricks of requisitions, shortages, overages, tables of equipment, losses by fair wear and tear and otherwise, and all the fancy surveying tactics.

THEN the radio, Sunday: Pearl Harbor. Young Freddy was looking over his high-school lesson for the Monday. A studious kid, with West Point in mind. He himself was sitting in old slacks and slippers, pipe in mouth and trying to get the symphony. It wasn't a half hour later that he was at the Noncom's club, full of beer and full of fight.

"Old Kelly's going to lick them single-handed," they laughed.

"I'm going to put two hands to it," he said, and he laughed. But it never entered his head that he'd miss this time too. He wasn't training horses any more. He was stunned as he encountered one obstacle after another. He ended up in the General's office, his gray hair on end, his eyes, older now, but still like pinwheels.

"This is a young man's army, Kelly."

"So now it's I'm too old! Over thirty years in the Army I've been, and never heard a hostile shot. Is that fair? A good soldier—with the name of Kelly? It's a disgrace. I'll die with the shame of it."

"Your commanding officer says you cannot be spared. You're an expert supply man. You're too old, Kelly."

"I know the horses are out. Mayhap I'm too old for them, anyway. But I can drive one of those reconnaissance cars with the best of them. Mayhap my legs are a bit old. But my eyes and the rest of me can do the trick. 'Twill be a disgrace I'll never live down, sir."

But he had to live it down. Freddy went, and he stayed on. He aged, five years in one, as he read of battles in far places, and Freddy's letters from Basic, then from the camp in California. The least he could do was be near the boy before he went across; and—who knew?—out there on the Coast he might work it himself.

"I've never asked for a favor in my life, but I'll write to that General in Frisco. He was once a cav'lryman."

The following action was so swift it startled him. "See what I mean?"

his adviser, Sgt. Martin, said. "And you know others, if that don't pan out. It's something you earn by service, Kelly. It aint no favor."

There *were* others. The best of them all was on Oahu. He'd missed Fred; and after all, Hawaii was in the right direction. He ended up in a replacement depot on Oahu. Once they'd glimpsed his record, they received him with open arms.

"I'm hardly off the dirty boat," he wrote to Martin, "but they got me up to my neck in a supply snarl. A beauty. A regular championship chess-game. But the hell of it here, it's as peaceful as the Garden of Eden before the snake come along."

Yes, the best of them all was on Oahu. Wasn't he the Captain who had godfathered young Freddy? Who had made out his first service record when the boy was but a day old? Freddy was out there now, the great mysterious blank of the Pacific between them—fighting north through those jungles. But the ex-captain was the head of it all. At Ft. Shafter he made the plans, directed shrewdly and understandingly the movements of the thousands of Freddy's fighting their way toward Tokyo.

But he wasn't a captain now. He was a three-star general. Right in Kelly's battered old foot-locker there was a picture of him with writing:

"To Sergeant Frank Kelly, my good friend and comrade in arms."

What would these little fellows around the Depot say if they saw that? But they never saw it. And he himself never saw its original. Who was he to thrust himself on a man like that?

But he thrust himself on the Depot commander, an old colonel, perhaps soured as himself at this safe distance from war.

But it was the same story.

"You know better, Sergeant. You're too old for the forward areas. Even for supply work! There are no rear areas out there. They're in it from one end to the other, night and day. You couldn't take it. You're doing your job here. A fine job. A hell of a lot more use to the service than firing a machine-gun or throwing grenades. If that's what you mean."

"I've got to get one crack at them now. I'll go out with a bare record. Never a star for my ribbon."

He even took it to the general in command of the depots.

He got nothing but coldness there. It began to dawn on him that vicariously he was implying criticism of their own distance from the front.

The war rolled on. He got a few letters from Freddy. But they said little or nothing—and with all the education the boy had had! A waste as far as letters went. Just: *"I'm well and everything is going okay."*

Just as well the boy's mother was gone to her everlasting rest. She had died quietly one night, with him by her side, in the hospital at Ft. Clark. She had looked up at him, he holding her poor white hand.

"Take care of him, Frank," she'd said. "And make a good soldier of him."

She meant it. It was all there in those few words. Her own father had been a good one; the best top sergeant in the regiment. And he wasn't doing so bad himself, he knew. Well, the kid had come out all right. A corporal at seventeen! That was a ten-year job in the old Army. . . .

The war rolled on. Desperation was ever at work in him. It couldn't last much longer; they reached the Philippines and then the Ryukyus. Okinawa was only a little over three hundred miles from Tokyo. They were fighting for their lives on that dirty far-off island—fighting as they had never fought before. And the boy was there; he had found that out. One advantage, at least, in being with the outfit he was with. For they sent the replacements forward, young boys like Freddy, hardened by the schooling they gave them at the Jungle Training, the Amphibian and the Heavy Weapons courses. And they were sending them to the depot on Okinawa to the Tenth Army, and so he learned from escort officers sent out with them where Freddy was.

KELLY sweated over reports of the fighting. The landing was on Easter Sunday, and he heard of it as he came out from the Chapel. Kerama Rotto had already fallen. Then came reports that the Japs had not opposed the landing. High heart then, and maybe there'd be nothing to it, after all. Yontan and Kadena airports were taken in the first three hours; still no fighting. Ah, they'd learned at last, the dirty yellow-bellies! They were through. . . . But no, they weren't through; they were hard and fast across the island in the Machinato Line, and then the hell began. Twenty-four days later the Twenty-seventh Division smashed the Japs from Kakazu Ridge, and that was the end of the Machinato Line.

Still no word of Freddy. So he was okay.

But there was another line, a more terrible line; the Naha-Shuri-Yonaburu Line. By mid-May, forty-five thousand Japs had died; but they fought on, killing, killing, killing. Their new spigot mortar added to the horror. The kamikaze planes tore with frenzy at the ships ringing the beaches. Then—Freddy died.

The day he got the message, he took the first jeep at hand and drove fast, without conscious thinking, to the big headquarters.

"The Commanding General is in the conference room," an aide told him. The General was busier this day than most, and the aide tried to ease the old man out and protect his commander from that inner softness of heart. No time for old-soldier tales this day.

But he missed. The General saw the old man, and he was the kind who never forgets—especially an old soldier. It was the thing about him the men of this new Army shook their heads about; could never understand. Ambassadors could wait; admirals, five-star generals—but not old soldiers. The aide stared, frowning at his appointment pad, as the minutes went by. Hell, that old issue was in there now longer than the Secretary of War had been! No one knew what happened in that quiet, high room. But Francis J. Kelly would always remember. Remember those kind eyes, that warm handshake, those low words.

"Yes. . . . Freddy. He was going to West Point, wasn't he? And I may lose my own boy, you know. He's in the E.T.O. So you've been here all this time and never came to see me?"

"I—I couldn't do that, sir."

"You're a friend, you know. There aren't many of them. For any of us."

He felt the lump in his throat. "I couldn't ask you what I really wanted, sir. And I'd have done that."

"You know you're too old for that."

"There are generals out there as old as me. General Buckner died there."

It was hard to answer that—to explain.

"But I'm going to see that you get out from a trip. To see where Freddy died."

He had picked up a phone then, and called a staff officer. And that day Sergeant Francis J. Kelly had lunch at the big house on the circle, and the talk was not of war but of the old days when war was a forgotten thing.

SERGEANT KELLY heard voices—young voices, and close by. By peering through the slit before him, he could see two of them. At the first sound of them, he thought he had heard the word Kelly.

He cocked his head; what would these young ones think if they saw him moping here? But he *had* heard the word Kelly. For now he heard it again.

One of them said: "Aw, you're always bellyaching, Kelly. How are you any different than the rest of us?"

"Because my name's Kelly. Ha! Ha! Get it?"

Sergeant Kelly could see him as he said it. See the tough, freckled face, the swashbuckling look, undoubtedly aped from the movie version of a hard guy.

"I bet you'd run like a rabbit if a Nip jumped at you right now."



The huge helmet on Sergeant Kelly's small gray head gave him a gnomelike rather than martial look.

"Yeah. You're safe. Under nineteen. Hell, the war'll be over before you come of age to fight."

There was low fury in young Kelly's voice at this needling.

"Yaah? You guys want to bet on it?"

"On what!" Buck said.

Sgt. Kelly could see Buck. Twisted out there in the hot weeds, he looked like a dusty grasshopper.

"You two get into action before me?"

"It's mathematics," Pete said lazily. "Arithmetic. Got to be nineteen."

Buck laughed loudly. Kelly sat up hard and glared at them.

"You want to bet I don't get in a fight right here—on this Okinawa Island?"

Buck made a loud noise, and Pete laughed.

"You see that patrol come in today? No? Well, I did," Kelly almost shouted. "What they done to Ellis?"

"They shot Ellis twice—one through his neck. I tried to see him in the hospital tent, but they wouldn't let me. He's maybe going to die. And two others of the patrol was hit."

"Just snipers," Buck said carelessly. "Could happen if you was lying in your tent."

"Snipers!" Kelly grated. "Do you know that town only about two miles from camp? Kachi? It was there."

"A pal of mine, he was. You think I'm going to take that?"

"And like it," Pete said. "Aint it most chow time?"

"Not with the name of Kelly, I'm not."

"Kelly, bah! What's a Kelly? What's a Kelly, Pete?"

Sergeant Kelly waited with interest to hear the answer to that. He watched his young namesake's hard tanned face, and he saw the stiffening of the jaw, the fire come into the blue eyes. Then came the words in a slow insulting growl:

"They got a book of decorations. I seen it in the orderly-room back at Basic. Full of Kellys. You hear of Colin Kelly, and Commando Kelly—"

"Brothers, I guess. Or maybe just first cousins."

"I don't say that," Kelly said fiercely. "I just say we're all alike. It aint no coincidence so many of them win it. It's in the Kelly blood. The same in every army; British and all the others. It's on the record."

"So now you go and spoil it," Buck said. "How about chow? Must be coming up."

There was a long pause, and Sergeant Kelly could see the smoldering champion of his name. He was staring moodily at the dropping sun. At last he turned and said softly:

"So now I *don't* go and spoil it."

"Yeah?" Politely from Pete.

"Yeah," Kelly echoed contemptuously. "You want to fight?"

"How do I do that?"

"You want to go with me tomorrow? You and Buck here?"

"Where at?" Buck said.

He sat up, and now Sergeant Kelly could see Pete. He had moved closer to young Kelly. He was a dark, round-faced boy with incredibly yellow hair. On a woman, you would have said it was dyed.

Kelly said, sliding his eyes from one to the other of them: "Where at? Where at?"

"Kachi's off limits. We might run into one of our patrols," Buck said.

"They take in the east area tomorrow. I seen the order," Kelly said.

"We don't have no equipment," Pete said. "We got a fight—we got to have something to fight with."

Young Kelly stared at him as at a pitiful halfwit. "We're having rifle exercises, full equipment, tomorrow afternoon, aint we? Out that direction. We just leak away when the gang comes back. They don't watch you much, coming back."

"What about ammunition—grenades?"

Young Kelly nodded his head pontifically. "Jest leave that to me. I look ahead; not like you guys. I got all we need, stashed away. Bit by bit I done it, looking ahead to something like this. You guys in?"

"Me, I'll do anything to break up this lousy way of life," Pete said. "But not no guardhouse. Not me."

"I never had no Kellys in the family," Buck drawled. "But I had a great-grandfather at San Jacinto, and another relative at the Alamo. I suppose that would be small change, though, to a Kelly. Still, we always liked to fight. But, like Pete, I don't like it enough to do time for it. Or to stir up a big nest of Japs with three under-aged replacements. I like a sporting chance when I fight."

Kelly said coldly: "I figured the one Kelly and you two ought to be enough to lick any bunch of Japs that ever lived. I see I'm wrong. Excuse me." He was on his feet now, and the others followed him up. "I see 'em lining up for chow. All they think of, like a bunch of animals."

"Damned if they aint," Pete said.

As they moved away down the grassy slope, Sergeant Kelly heard one last growl from his namesake. Young Kelly said scornfully:

"Only thing I wish is, I knew another Kelly. Nothing to it, then."

KELLY lay on his canvas cot, watching the clouds pass by the moon. He could do this, because the sides of the tent were rolled up, and the front was folded partly open. There was mere bravado in this; for at mess he had heard a staff sergeant, who must have been all of twenty, comment of a similar offender:

"He'll get a knife in his throat one of these bright nights. Or maybe a grenade rolled in on him from that hill back there. Me, I dog 'em down tight, any tent I'm in."

But Sergeant Kelly hoped such would be his luck. He lay under his mosquito bar and hoped. By his side, ready to hand on a bomb-case, lay his pistol, heavy with ball cartridges, his trench-knife and flashlight. His huge helmet was beside them. He was fully dressed, including his shoes.

He remembered tales his contemporaries, who had been lucky enough to fight the Moros in the Philippines, used to tell. Tales of brazen, fanatic *juramentados*. Why, these Japs were mere puppets, compared with those wielders of *barong* and *kris*. The thing to do was keep your head, have a shell in the chamber, your pistol cocked, stand steady and let them have it.

He was glad and appreciative the Colonel had given him this tent alone. No one to ask embarrassing questions, draw from him the record of his shame for this war—or any war.

But there was still time to remedy it. That young Kelly—he was true to the breed, all right. Itching for a fight. And except for his own sad example, he had yet to see one in that mood end up disappointed. He had a hunch on Kelly. . . . Trouble for Kelly. He sighed. At that moment he hated the lifelong discipline in him that forbade their fraternization in crime.

There had been good news tonight. His heart had been heavy as he walked back from Freddy's tank to the mess shack, thinking the war was nearly at its end. Russia was in, and that incredible bomb had been dropped on Japan. They couldn't take much more. And by the same token, he would lose what slight chance he had of fighting as a Kelly should fight—and not with requisitions and surveys—unless a real break came his way. And perhaps this was his break, was his immediate reaction, when he picked up the mimeographed orders that had just been issued. They read, in part:

"The recent atomic bombing of Japan and the entry of Russia into the war may create a state of mind in the Japanese leading to an all-out Banzai attack by land, sea and air. In the event of such an attack, it is expected to be directed against this base. The possibility of attack by airborne troops must not be overlooked."

Ah, if they'd only come! Nowhere on this island was there a better place for them to land and reorganize. For here was a great shallow receptacle occupied only by green replacements; ridges on all sides for them to rush to, to cover the reorganization of their followers. . . .

Lying on his cot, staring through the yellow-green mosquito bar, Sergeant Kelly prayed for his break. And tried desperately to keep his old eyes open to watch the sullen night. But his day had been long in the hot sun, and the dragging plane-ride from Oahu had taken over thirty almost sleepless hours, not yet made up.

He slept. . . . And then he awoke to glory.

At first it seemed a dream, the kind you always remember and love to recreate for years afterward. He was on his feet, standing, his belt almost fastened about him before he was really awake. Before the dream wonderfully became the reality.

The noise wasn't much, not loud. He found time, an instant, to wonder at this. So they lied about it, then; the noise of battle. It was almost like a slow-motion movie, with the soundtrack muted. But it was beautiful, more beautiful than he had ever imagined, and he had imagined plenty in the years gone by, of the glory and wonder of battle.

He was stunned with its magnificence. He stood in the opening of the

tent, enthralled. "Rooted to the spot," he later described it.

Standing there, pistol in hand, words of wonder rushed through his mind. As though his own voice, muted like those guns, ran on with them in an inspired and grateful commentary. He stared with eyes wide up at that writhing sky. Against the curtain of clouds, edged in places by a frightened moon, he followed the paths of thousands of bright and crossing trails.

"Tracers from every gun in the world. . . . A regular lattice of hell, for them. Every color of the rainbow! An arch of triumph, if ever there was such a thing! Let them take *that*, the yellow-bellies! Let them come down in their kites through that hot hell! From every point of the compass and from the ships as well. Just see them 90-mm.'s winking at them up there! And them searchlights like big white swords!"

The sound was muted, because the guns were not near; but every gun in the world, in truth, seemed to be in action. Their distant thumps made a steady undercurrent of sound; minor notes swept through it on the night wind.

"Sirens! They're in by air, the devils! Sure, I can see them myself! It's the kamikazers, and there by that cloud is a 'chute bellowing out!"

Also bellowing out were scores of young voices from the battalion areas below. Lights were springing up, a short, sharp crack sounded nearby.

"Stop that firing! Cease firing!" a harsh voice called, splitting the darkness like a knife. A swift smack shook the tent-pole by Sergeant Kelly's hand.

That did it. . . . "They're dropping stuff on us! It's here that they're coming down!" he found himself shouting, as he ran down the slope and toward the clots of dark bodies, the sound of young shouting.

THE M. O. waited until Sergeant Kelly came out of the Colonel's tent before he approached it cautiously. The Colonel was still red in the face.

"I heard the end burst and saw the old man's face. Was it that bad?"

"It could have meant panic. He deserved hell, and he got it. To make it worse, he shot his mouth off. I damned near ran him into the guard tent. Another word, and I would have. General or no General, I'm shipping him out of here tomorrow. He had the nerve to tell me the lack of action—meaning me—was scandalous. No fighting spirit."

"He didn't know, then?"

"What?"

"That they were just shooting off steam—celebrating a false armistice."

The Colonel stared at his feet. "And it was scandalous, I admit. A disgrace. But *we* weren't in it. I got that

stopped almost at once, as you heard. But it was too late to stop Hero Kelly. Know what he did? Got a bunch of those under-nineteen kids at the far end of the line, and had them running like billy goats up the ridge there. Shooting like a bunch of Hollywood cowboys. Wonder everybody wasn't killed. As it is, one hit a booby trap and got a toe knocked off. And there are sprained ankles, bruises and wire cuts galore. It took us half the night to round them up. Imagine! Tells me he *saw* parachutists coming down!"

"When he found out it was all in fun, what then?"

"Like a hot cigaret to a balloon. But the horror of it is: those kids have lost discipline. They've got an idea he's a great fighting man. An old Indian fighter, Rough Rider, Remington classic. It didn't enter their heads that *we* knew it was all a demonstration; because that damned loud-speaker was out of whack at first, and we couldn't pass the word. What they think is that the rest of us skulked in our holes while Alamo Joe Kelly took the fighting initiative. And I'll bet the old issue never heard a shot fired in anger in all his thirty or forty or what-have-you years in the Army!"

"I wouldn't take that bet," the M. O. said thoughtfully. "Let's go get our desiccated vitamins."

SERGEANT KELLY didn't eat any vitamins. He lay alone in his tent. Not like Achilles, because Achilles was a *proven* warrior, and he was, at best, a disproven one. Hard words had been said to him, and all of them deserved. All true. It was bitter to hear them, and the shame they had aroused grew in him, brought the burning of tears to his old eyes as he lay there in the awful heat and stared up at the green-brown tent-top.

He would go back in disgrace. A letter from this Colonel would go with him or follow him closely. The General would know; *he* knew everything. Or, if no letter was sent, word would flow back as word did in the Army. He would be the laughingstock of the Theater. And then, there was what the General had said at the end of their talk. Their talk of his going to see where Freddy had died:

"Remember, when you come back, I want to hear it all. Come right up to see me. I'll leave instructions."

That he would have to do. It was an order. And he would have to tell the truth! Creating a panic; unlawful assumption of authority; encouraging lack of discipline among recruits—that they now called "replacements." What else was it that colonel said? But that was enough. . . .

He seemed more alone in the world as he lay there, his mind a blur of shame and worry, than even when Freddy's mother had died. And that,

he thought, was the worst day of his life. When Freddy went, it hadn't been so bad; it was a soldier's way of going, and his heart had, in a way, been prepared for it. A Bronze Star would have been nice; but many good soldiers had gone without it. They just hadn't noticed Freddy as he drove that tank toward the ridge behind this tent here. But they had noticed *him* as he had led those young men last night. Ah, at first, how wonderful it had seemed! One look at him the kids had taken in the half light there when the moon came out:

"It's the old sergeant!" one of them had shouted. So they had noticed him about the camp the day before. And noticed him favorably. Because another yelled: "Take us up San Juan Hill, Sarge! You got the know-how, and we got the guts. Lead us to it!"

That brief lust for battle as they raced toward the ridge, all of them seeing Jap parachutists, eager to get to grips. What matter that it was all a sham? They didn't know it. Their bravery and willingness was there. It's before the fight that it's tough, that it takes guts; not during it. Wasn't that what Sergeant Martin always said? And he through the five major engagements of the first World War, to say nothing of minor bits like the Border and Philippines and Siberia.

But you got no credit for that. Who could know what was in your mind? Not that Colonel, surely; for, barely veiled in his scathing talk, was the insinuation that it was all show-off. That he must have heard the loud-speaker explaining—that he wanted to make a paper hero of himself.

It was a bitter pill to swallow, a bitter pill for a Kelly.

"And I won't swalley it!" he muttered shakily.

All was lost now; a life of failure. All were gone. Ma, and Freddy, and even the old dog Red, who—after fifteen years of faithful following—had looked up at him with those sad eyes for the last time just before he had come across.

Nothing to lose now. A Kelly doesn't just lie down and take it. That other, younger Kelly had given him his cue. Too bad he couldn't reward him.

Sergeant Kelly lifted his old body from the cot. It was stiff—stiff from the wild, wasted moving of the night before. It had been old for years. He stood by the cot, no tears in his eyes now. Nothing old about them. They were, for the instant, almost young—hard and bright. Carefully he looked about the tent. Then he gathered about him what he would need. . . .

Sergeant Kelly had walked for almost an hour. This was the hard part of his plan, the hardest by far. By the map, straight across the coun-

try, the little Okinawan town appeared a mere two miles away. But to walk over these hills, through these weeds and rank cane-fields in this awful heat was something else again. He sank down on the crest of a low hill. He was old, all right; too old, from this day on, to soldier. This was his last march, and here he was all in after a few miles of walking! Even a cavalryman had to walk, leading up and down hills, and almost always in action.

KELLY wiped the sweat from about his eyes and peered ahead. There was the town all right—if you could call that bit of tile and gray stone a town. It looked pretty from here; each of the tiny houses with its hedge of flowered shrub; little yards and the sweet-potato- and cane-fields beyond.

Not a sign of life; all the inhabitants had been herded in the civilian concentration-camps farther up the island. Here lay their poor town, empty, all of them dispossessed from happy homes because of the beastliness of their alien masters from the north.

"The dirty yellow-bellies!" Sergeant Kelly muttered. "Watching me now with their beady little eyes, without a doubt. And that's what I want. I've got the carbine with fifteen in it, and the pistol with seven. They'll think I'm coming straight in through the cane here ahead. But I'll fool them. They'll be hearing from me in another quarter."

His own words inflamed him and brought back sharply the fervor and the fighting spirit that had sent him this far. He got awkwardly to his feet, set his heavy load and moved openly and exaggeratedly toward the cane-field in the little valley below. There was a path here leading straight to the village and Sergeant Kelly followed it.

He half expected a shot before he came into the cane, but all there was to hear was the hum of insects and the faint afternoon wind in the cane above his head. You'd think they'd clean this rats'-nest out once and for all—send a company, if need be, and wipe them all up. But at mess last night there was talk about it, and so he understood their apparently lazy attitude. They were transients, most of these skulking Japs; those who had escaped to the south after the formal fighting ended. At night they moved in groups to the north, hoping to link up with their comrades still fighting in the last pocket. There was food of a sort to be had by the little town; still undug potatoes and other roots, and always the cane and water. You simply couldn't clean them out once and for all.

They were well armed. Patrol reports said they had American M-1 rifles, carbines, plenty of ammunition

and American grenades. They were tough bees to disturb, and the chances were most patrols in the area didn't disturb them too conscientiously. . . .

"But they'll be disturbed this day," Sergeant Kelly muttered with stubborn hate. "It's the last thing I'll do in this world, and it'll be done right. God forbid, one of them doesn't snipe me to my death before I've made a score of it."

To insure this, he moved off the trail now—moved off just as he spied a cunningly arranged trip-wire set for unwary feet. Old as he was, there was no need today to hoard strength. The best that was left in him must be used now. So intent was he, so possessed with this truth, that actually he moved almost with the agility, the ease, of a young man. Not a cane-top moved above him; no sound came from his sneakered feet; no bit of his equipment touched what it should not touch. From his scouting young manhood, the craft came back to him. For the moment, youth again ran hot and able through his blood. He moved like a silent snake through the cane, making his way toward the flank of the village, the whole picture of what lay before him vivid in his mind.

There was a small stone building he had marked off to the right of the town on a knoll. Perhaps a little granary; but whatever it was, it looked down the throat of whoever moved in the streets or buildings below.

"Get there, I will," Sergeant Kelly thought grimly. "And once there, I'll bide till 'tis worth my while to strike. I've a big canteen of water, and I'm not much of a man for water. And I've the two rations they call these days 'field,' that would have been a feast for Thanksgiving Day in the old Army. And if later I'm found, there they'll by the same token find plenty of the rats about me—God grant."

He said the last aloud, bowed his head and would have crossed himself, but it didn't seem right with the pistol in his hand. His heart beat high, as a little later, he peered from the cane-field edge, heard nothing, saw nothing.

"I'll creep the rest of the way." He estimated the intervening terrain. "I'll slip through those weeds like a patient ant."

And he did. It took what seemed hours, but at last he was behind the little stone building, his sweat-drenched eyes agleam as he studied it with the care of a real-estate speculator. All was quiet, there was no sign of movement and, best of all, several birds hopped about by the broken back door, showing that all was serene within.

He slipped into the place with a last, quiet rush. . . .

Over an hour had passed. Sergeant Kelly's eyes were tired from their



A cute pair they were, she with her black bangs and little kimono, and not a day over ten, Kelly thought.

ceaseless focusing in the field-glasses. He set the glasses down and sighed softly. It was like waiting at a deer-run. He looked through the glassless window near him, and saw that the sun was sliding low into the haze over the sea. But deer had to come down to drink; that's why you knew where to wait. And these yellow-bellies knew there was water as well as simple food to be had in this town. It shouldn't be long now.

HE wanted to smoke, but he dared not; the animals would smell it. But he could chew. Not since he'd been a show-off recruit had he chewed. The old-timers said it cut the alkali dust on the hikes.

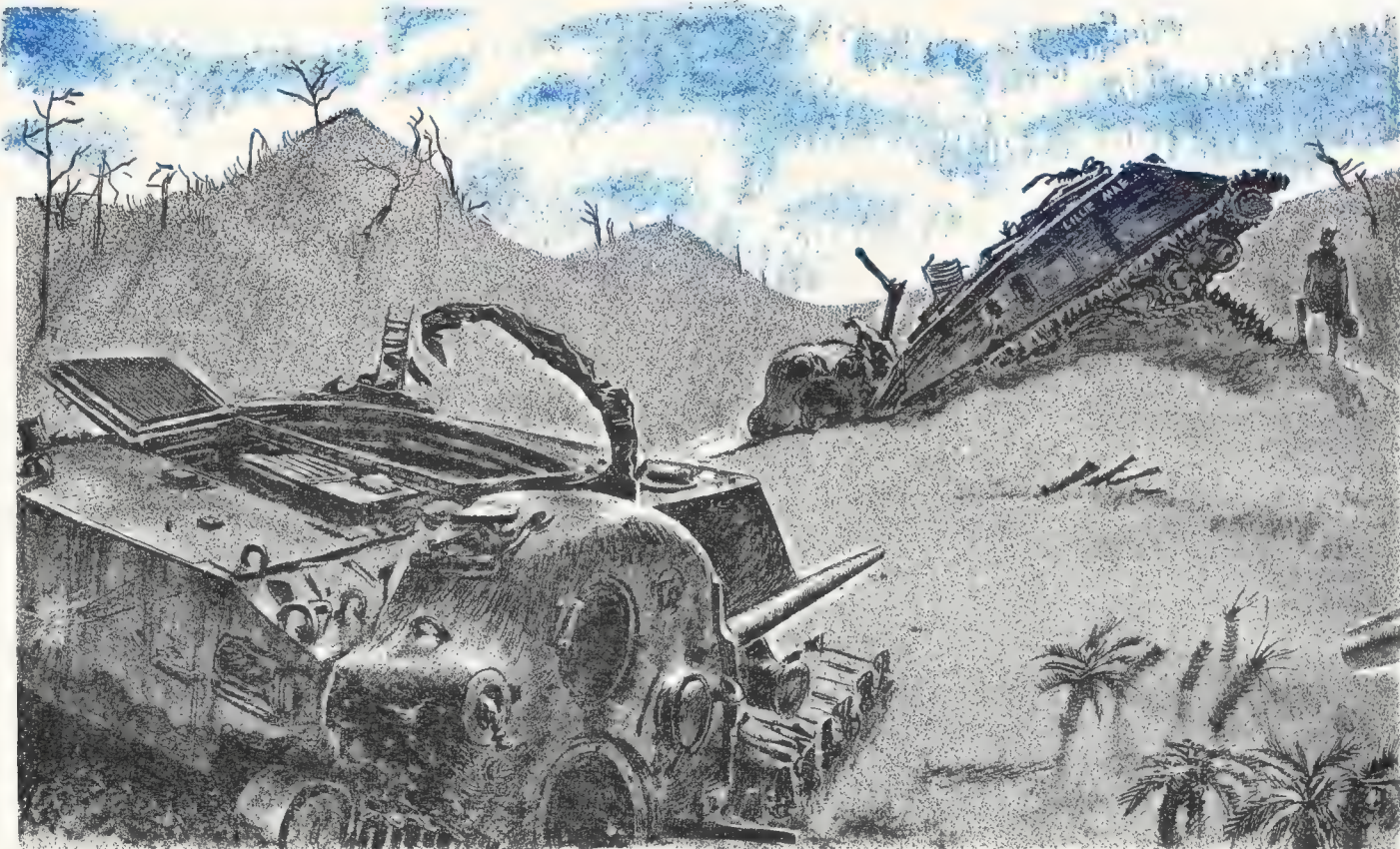
He bit off a piece of cellophane-wrapped cigar and thrust it back in his mouth.

"I'll have to swalley the juice; there'll be no spitting. Not that much sound can I make."

He was in an angle of the small room, a vantage-point whence he could see through two windows and the open back doorway. . . . He was about to ease his position on the hard

clay of the floor when he heard the sound. It was eerie, and it was frightening, and the hair on the back of his head seemed to creep up as he swung his carbine toward the rear. Framed in the empty doorway was the green of a far hill, and nearer, weed-choked bits of wall and part of a well-sweep. Frozen, fascinated, he watched as the pole with its stone weight moved across his field of vision. He dared not move; but he must move. How many were there of the devils? Were they all grouped about the well-top? He must think, picture in his mind exactly how that garden looked and where he must move to, so he could get his shots in fast and true. And he did picture it; for long before he'd made his final crawl to the house, he had tabbed everything in his path in his memory for future reference. That was what scouting and patrolling in the old cavalry taught a man, if nothing else.

He made his move. Carbine before him, he eased himself into the far right corner of the room, his head down, his body tight to the floor. He could feel the taste of the musty clay in his



Kelly looked at the Lillie Mae and at the battle-scarred ridge, the Objective, and pride

mouth; his nose was clogged with the dust of it. There was a broken table in the corner, and from behind it he could see. His carbine came up with his eyes; he knew just where to aim it, and he intended to fire fast. There was a flash of gray-white out there, and movement; his finger eased in on the trigger. For all life here was hostile, and he who fired first won.

AND then he saw the goat. On the goat was a long, thin rope, and at the other end of the rope was a drab little figure in dirty white. He lowered the carbine and stared entranced. The little girl was standing straight and calm beside the well, her eyes cast down at the rising bucket. The goat tugged at the rope like a remount at a halter shank, then jumped like a cat with a hot foot. For the first time in months, Sergeant Kelly nearly laughed. A cute pair, they were, she with her little black bangs and not a day over ten, he thought. With the little kimono on her like a lady doll, and her serious big eyes.

And then he came to with a start. Kimono and bangs be damned! It's a Jap she was, and one of them. A little scout they'd sent out, the dirty yellow-bellies! All innocence, she and her goat; just take a walk about the town and signal the all clear. Or, if decent Americans were about, it's sweet as pie she'd be, and they'd make much of her, as real soldiers did with kids, and

she'd get the signal off to the swine waiting under cover by that hill.

"I'll try my dirty Japanese on her," Sergeant Kelly decided. "Though they wouldn't let me out here to fight with the Intelligence; and waste I thought it was. But it can pay me off now. For if I do say it myself, up there at Schofield they said I was the best of them in the language class. Officers and all."

He rose to his feet, edged to the doorway and looked over the terrain. Nothing in sight. There wouldn't be. Not until this one had made the safe tour of the town.

"Tomare!" he called sharply. "Wakari masu ka? Do you understand?"

The little girl moved her black head calmly, slowly, toward the doorway. The goat gave a bound at the end of the rope. She glanced at it briefly, spoke softly, then looked back at Sergeant Kelly. She was not over ten yards from him.

"Ugoku na!" he warned grimly.

But she did move. She moved very gracefully. She bowed low, her small hands coming together in front of her, and she kept her head low, the tangled black hair of it falling about her small pale face.

"Chik a yore! Bring the goat with you."

She straightened slowly, her eyes rolling up along him until they were fixed steadily, full of a deep gravity, on his own.

"Yes, please," she said at last. "Yes, please," in soft, slurring Japanese.

She moved toward him then with measured steps, and when she was inside the door, he grabbed the rope from her and dragged the tugging goat in after her. She looked sidewise at the goat.

"She is very thirsty," she said. "She doesn't understand."

"But I do," Sergeant Kelly said. "And she'll stay thirsty. Now, where are the Jap soldiers! The ones who sent you here?"

She shivered as he said the words, but her eyes were set on his unmovingly.

"Where are they?" Sergeant Kelly demanded, and he shook her until her wild hair flung out about her ears.

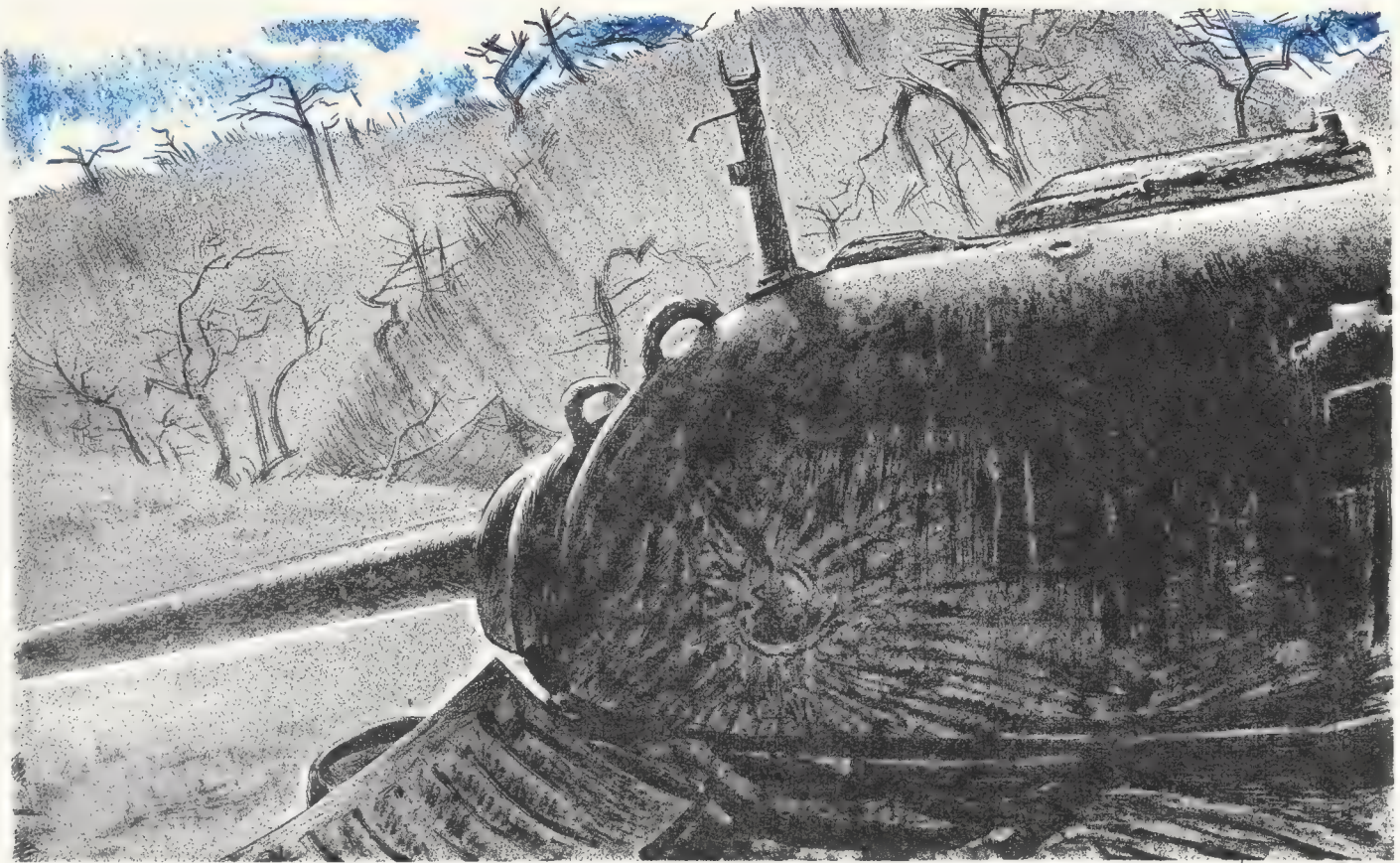
HER eyes remained steady and without emotion. She said softly, distinctly, pointing at him:

"You are American, not Japanese."

"You're damned right I'm American," Sergeant Kelly said in that language, casting a quick covering look out the doorway. "Where are the Japanese soldiers who sent you here?"

Her eyes changed a little then, not much. Not as an American child's would have. But there was fear in them; perhaps more resignation than fear, Sergeant Kelly thought afterward.

"I am," she said simply, "Okinawan. Not Japanese."



welled up. "They made it the closest," he whispered. "Freddy got as far as they went."

"You're a spittin' image of a Jap," Sergeant Kelly snapped. "Don't give me that guff."

She shook her head gravely. "No. Okinawan. From Shuri. When the guns shoot, it blows away like dust. My house and my dog and my father and my mother. I have only Tomi left. And I bring her here for a drink of water."

"You bring this nanny goat here for a drink? Your sole mission in life, ha!" Sergeant Kelly scoffed, half in English and the rest in Japanese.

She regarded him unblinkingly, but there were shadows in her dark, tired eyes. Kelly noticed this then; how thin she was, how immense the dark eyes were in the pale, too-old-looking face. For a moment he knew a pang of pity. After all, she was only a kid; about like Freddy had been when they made the maneuvers at Marfa. And not a tear out of her; not a wail. Just the goat, not her, she was worrying about.

"How did you get here? And be staying alone out here when the rest of the Okinawans are being cared for in camps by the Americans?"

She thought a long time before answering. She looked at the goat Tomi, and she looked at her thin, bare legs latticed with scratches. She brushed a hand across her hanging hair, and the hand was thin and pale.

"I'll be crying myself out of this in a minute," Sergeant Kelly feared.

"And by the same token crying myself into hell at the end of a Jap bayonet."

"Answer me!" he almost shouted, forgetting where he was.

She answered him with another low bow, a bow of utter resignation.

"What will you do with me?" she said softly. "Will you beat me? But not, please, Tomi. She has been sick. She was cut, and she ran away."

Kelly saw then the half-healed wound on the young goat's side, and he said: "Cut by what?"

"By the sword of the Japanese. But she escaped, and I ran with her. For a long time, some nights of great rain, we lived in hiding in the iron machine with guns in it. Then in the tombs; but that was wrong, and filled me with fear at nights. So at last we hid in the canes. For many days now."

"Hiding from what?"

"The Japanese soldiers. Waiting for Americans. But we see no Americans."

"How did you know I was American?"

She made her first expressive gesture. She lifted a hand to her eyes, looked away from him. She said in a shaking voice: "We see the dead American soldiers. One had a little flag. And I have seen the flag in pictures in my school."

"Didn't you know Japanese soldiers come to this town all the time?"

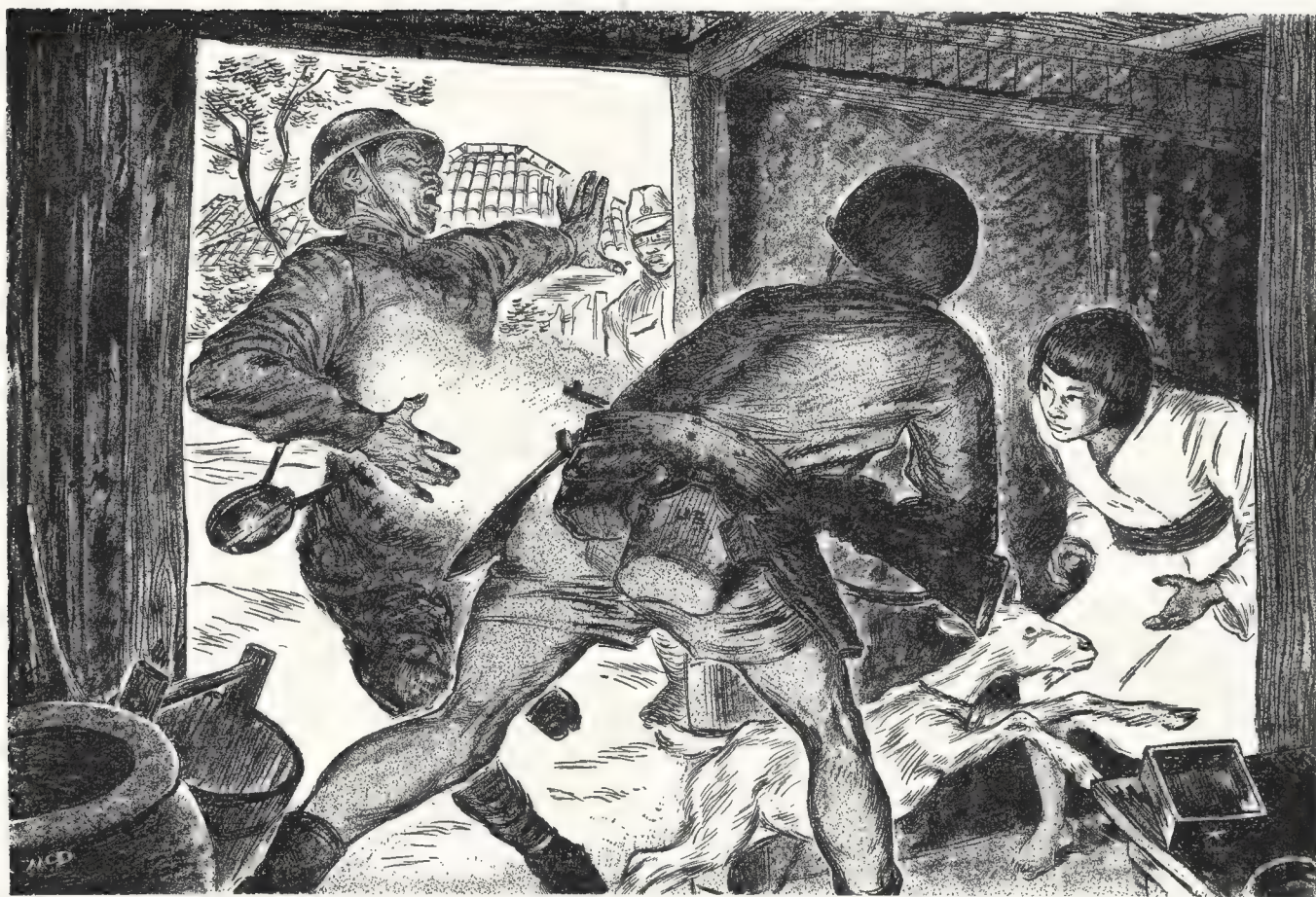
She shivered. "Only twice we have been here." She moved her head

slightly toward the door. "Up there in the hill we hide. We see this, and it is quiet to look at. It looks like where I lived before the guns shook it away. So we come for water and potatoes."

"I'm liable to believe this little witch if I keep asking her any more dumb questions," Kelly thought. "Besides, I've got my work to do. What now? I can't turn her and that leppin' nanny loose. True or false, Japs would shake the story out of her. But if true it is, it's a hard fate that waits her here with me."

SHE stared at him unwinkingly as he pondered this. But the decision was taken out of his hands, as had so often been his fate in life. Luckily he was facing the back door when the Jap helmet appeared. Then he saw the cruel, twisted face, and the man shouted to others behind. Sergeant Kelly fired the carbine from where it lay along his ribs, and the goat leaped and bleated frantically. But the Jap went down; it was a close and lucky shot, and Sergeant Kelly went after it.

At the door, his foot across the fallen soldier, he saw the others. They were by the well, and one was still looking, as though amazed, at the dripping pail which obviously had directed the attention of the dead one to the little house. Kelly fired fast and coolly, but his blood ran hot and wild in him as he felt the whiz of the first



*Then he saw the cruel, twisted face, and the man shouted to others behind.
Sergeant Kelly fired the carbine from where it lay along his ribs.*

defensive shot, the thud of another against the wall beside him.

There had been three by the well, and now all but one were flat on a knee, a hand on the well-curb, jerking quick shots from a big Nambu pistol. Sergeant Kelly felt none of the shots, though one had torn through his pistol belt. His heart was singing with the joy of combat. At last, after over forty years of service, he was in combat. Bullets were flying at him, his own finding a mark; he was doing the work he had been trained for, bred for.

KELLY held the carbine at the ready, and stepped out toward the well. His thin, usually mild face was now a berserk mask.

"That's the four of them! I've earned my keep for the while; but it's a long debt I owe. Any more of you dirty yellows around?" he called loudly, for shots they'd heard now, and his voice of triumph might as well go with them.

But there was no answering sound, and he could see no sign of life from where he stood. He turned to go in and review the terrain from the front window. In the center of the dirt floor stood the little girl. Obviously she hadn't moved. The goat was taking up the slack of its tether. With

mincing steps it was approaching the dead Jap in the doorway.

Sergeant Kelly glared at the goat, and then carried his hard look on to the child.

"You see what happens to Japs," he said, "when an American soldier gets after them."

There was no change in her expression. It was as dead as the man on the threshold. But her eyes moved a little; they seemed to gleam in the dim light.

She said, almost in a whisper: "More would be better."

Sergeant Kelly's heavy brows went up. "You little savage! If it wasn't for those slant eyes on you, I'd say you had a bit of Irish, at that."

But as he said this in English, there was no answer.

"And the goat and all," he muttered as he passed by her and picked up the field-glasses. He swept the glasses over the town, and it seemed to lie still and quiet. The sun was lowering, maybe another two hours of light left.

"And you," he muttered over his shoulder as he stared, "will have to beat it. You and your goat."

There was no sound, and he turned and frowned at her. He said, in his slow Japanese:

"Get your water now and go, child. I came for them, and I got some of

them. It was surprise I feared without getting my own shots in. But they know I'm here now. And I want them to come. I have no fear if you tell them now."

Her eyes traveled over him gravely for a long time; then she said softly:

"You want me to go away? You do not like me to stay?"

"I want you to go. There'll be more fighting here—I hope. You would be killed. You and your nanny Tomi, here."

She watched him unblinking. Then she said simply: "I look for the American soldier, and you are here. And you killed Japanese." She shrugged toward the dead man. "Two come and kill my father. And one with a knife on a gun kill my mother. And all the time the American guns were shooting. So, the Japanese will kill me and Tomi. That is why I hide so long until I see an American."

"You've the stubbornness of the Irish in you. But it has more logic than the green brand, I got to admit. But see—where I point? Over those little hills is the camp of the Americans. Go that way, and you will see them. Keep in the cane. I think these came from the other side, for I came that way, and there were none."

She thought this over carefully and said: "You come with me?"

"I'm here to kill Japs, and here I'll stay," Sergeant Kelly said irritably. "Here," he said suddenly and he tore open a ration he had laid by the sill and handed it to her.

"There's even candy in that, God help us! And gum. What food for a soldier! But a child like you it fits, it does."

She stood unmoving, and he put the package into her two hands. He had to lift them and set the fingers about the package, like the uncontrolled hands of an infant. Then her eyes dropped to the food, and the odor of it came up to her; touched her half-wild instinct. She looked at him again, and then he knew, and his heart felt shame in him that the child was starving. He turned away from her while she ate, lifting the glasses to his eyes—more to hide his embarrassment than for practical reasons. But as he held the glasses, a movement leaped at him in the lenses. Even as he watched, a blast of rifle-bullets smashed against the front of the house, and dust filmed the glass at his eyes.

"*Yoko ni nare!*" he yelled at the child. "Flat on your face! Then crawl back in that little room with no windows in it."

He had already dropped, himself, and he moved to a crack near the window frame whence he could peer out without exposure. He could see them even with the naked eye. There was a faint haze of dust by the windows of a house down by the little square; that was from their muzzle-blasts, he knew. From there they were covering the movement of the men he could plainly see working their way up toward a hedge line below the knoll where he lay.

"I WISH I had an arm like Bob Fellers," he muttered. "I'd drop a grenade on them from here. But I've no such arm. Though I've the eye, and a carbine zeroed in sweetly. And never did I miss making expert, with them laughing at me, at my age, till they saw the disks on the target. We'll see."

He slid from the crack and slipped quickly across the room. He saw, as though on a screen, fixed there because of mechanical failure, the picture of the girl and the goat. She sat there like a little Buddha, he thought. In spite of her own savage hunger, she was holding out to the ravenous goat bits of her precious hoard.

"Get back in there where I told you!" Sergeant Kelly yelled. "That dust kicking up around here aint from dancing."

She gave him a frightened glance, then moved into the little room. But she moved with the grace and dignity of a little goddess, and she did not forget to bow before she pulled at the goat's rope.

Then Kelly slid out the side window. Here were weeds growing rank and high close to the house, and through them he crawled his way to a low bit of wall he had marked on his earlier reconnaissance. From there, through the ragged weeds that edged it, he took a quick look, and his heart jumped eagerly. They were open to his fire, a grand target, and thinking all along he was in that house. He rested his carbine in a notch in the dusty wall, not without a twinge of guilt. Not that he needed a rest; but hell, all was fair in love and war, they said.

He fired fast and accurately. He had seen as many as six; how many more there were in better cover he could not tell. But those six got it; two he was sure of, for they lay without movement as the others stumbled forward into the hedge-line.

"That's six of them; six down!" he chanted. And that's when the first bullet hit him. It was a stray, because they couldn't have got onto him this soon. But it hurt as much as an aimed one. It burned across his shoulder, and he could feel the warmth of the blood as it slid down his chest. But he could still shoot.

He saw a head in the window where first he had spotted the dust. He fired two shots in there, and then a man came around the corner of the house, running; and he hit him squarely.

"No fixed target, *that!*" he gloated. "And it's a white disk come up."

He fired several more fast ones into the hedge, bent low, and leaped through the weeds back into the house. He felt like a goat himself, he exulted. A very young one. If only Freddy could be here—if the General could see him!

He took a quick look out the front window. Nothing. He shook out the almost empty magazine and snapped in a fresh one. He started reloading the empty, when a new burst of fire dusted the house. He turned to call to the girl. Young as he was, she could refill a magazine if he explained. The goat was there, its rope tied to a sagging shelf in the wall. But the little girl was gone.

"Hey, you!" he yelled sharply. So she'd slipped out on him! Good ridance, but she'd spot them the way in back. If they weren't already working up that way.

Then he saw her head. A shaft of the late sun struck the still glossy black of it as it stabbed through a loose tile on the roof. Before he could speak she said clearly and steadily:

"I am watching here. So if the Japanese come, I can call you. I looked up from by the well, but there is nothing."

"I'll be damned!" Sergeant Kelly said. "I guess maybe I'm wrong, at that."

"You're a good little kid," he yelled above the thudding of the bullets. "Keep down behind the well."

He lifted his own head up, and began to fire fast. He was just in time, for they were running at him, three of them, at least. But they were easy marks.

THERE was a terrific crash; the sun, the sky, the earth, the very world itself seemed blotted out. Dust and a stifling odor filled the shaking little house. Screams and wild yells came through the vibrating silence the bursting of the grenade left on this little world. Sergeant Kelly picked himself up. It was like a fall from a horse, with the horse on you, and you not knowing at once whether you were dead or alive.

His clothes were in tatters, and there was blood on him for sure. He could see it now; on legs and arms and running redly down his hands. He was against the front wall of the house, breathing heavily, and he saw her through the dust coming toward him. She called to him, frightened.

"*Kegashita,*" he nodded at his bleeding. "Nothing." He tried to laugh. Then he saw the bright blood as it came dark from her hair and the great rent in her kimono, showing the thin little body. He pointed at his aid pack, and showed her how to use it. Part of it he bound about her head. "Sure you look like a little tennis-player now," he said, and for the first time she smiled at the alien words.

All from fragments of the grenade, none of the wounds serious. He patted her hand.

"I know the goat's name, but now what's yours, little one?"

"Emi," she said softly.

"Sure, I knew a girl named Any once, a flirt of the first water," Kelly grinned. "Now what was that you were ducking your hand into your dress after, before we put on the pack?"

She looked away from him, and her hands shook a little, but she made no reply. Kelly smiled at her, humorously. "Sure, thin as you are, it's not a handkerchief you could hide. So you won't tell me, eh?"

Her small fingers went through the dirty sash at her waist. Her eyes rose to his then, as the small flag came out. It was a silk flag about a foot square, and there was blood-stain and the red dirt of Okinawa on it.

She looked down at the flag. "It is pretty," she said softly. "It is American."

"And where did you get it, child?" Sergeant Kelly asked softly. "For indeed it is a beauty."

"From the soldier—the dead American soldier where I hid in the tank. I did not mean to steal. But he was so beautiful, so kind-looking, even in death."



Outside, close up, the Japs were screaming; stumbling up the slope crazily, and there

"It wasn't stealing you did, Emi," Sergeant Kelly said. "Sure you can't steal a Bible or a flag."

Sergeant Kelly smiled benignly on her, and then took the flag and smiled down at that. But the smile left his face as he saw the faint, inked words on the right-hand end of the lowest white stripe.

He looked up, squarely into the child's grave stare.

"You looked at the face of a kind boy, little Emi," he said. "You carried his flag on bravely. Now help me with this back door, so no more of that Japanese confetti will land in on us."

Together they propped up the wooden door that had been torn from its hinges, and Sergeant Kelly set Emi to watch from the side window. He could see new movement in the village below, and he knew that they wouldn't be long. It would be from the back next, he supposed; and from that torn tile above him, he could look and see. Using a broken table and some old shelves, he contrived a step, and he worked his head up through the hole. But from the back there was no sign. High ground, too far away, and little cover between. Anyway, these Japs were dumb. Pick-up leadership, and maybe no officers. But dumb, anyway, to lose six men over nothing. But, committed, they must now save face, he knew. He looked down at Emi, like a little image as she stood peering obediently through the mask of weeds out the side window. If only she could use a gun—a pistol; but she was too young. Too young for the gun, but not for those beasts out there. That he knew from reports he

had read, and words he had heard from men who knew.

So he'd have to. . . . And he'd have to before they really got him. From behind, and quickly, with the pistol. As nearly his last act as possible, because he could never continue to look—

Pain caught at his heart as he thought this; a great sadness came over him. And a great temptation. He had sworn himself to this act, and he would have carried it through. He had given his word, his eyes heavenward, as he stood in that tent. And yet he had not meant to carry another with him; surely not one as innocent, as young as this child. And she with the little flag hidden so sweetly in her sash, and her big eyes on him even now with trust and confidence.

The sudden great pity that came to him as he met her watching eyes decided him. And now a surge of hope and happiness brought light into his faded eyes, a smile to his face.

Why not? It would be dark soon. Drive off this last attack, pelt them with a shower of grenades and make it out the back way. In the dark the two of them could skulk their way back by the path he had come. . . .

As he came down from the roof, she was again watching through the window. He called cheerily to her, and once again she gave him that slow, shy smile.

"What is your name?" she asked him, gravely again.

"Kelly," he said proudly. "Call me Kelly, child."

"Kelly-san," she repeated softly. "It is a pretty name."

"It's been called everything but that," he said gayly; and then, as he watched the ground before him, he told her of his plan. And when he had finished, she said quietly:

"And Tomi can go?"

"She would slow us up. Besides, she is white and they'd see her in the night."

She looked over at the goat, who was lying down now, her eyes glassy as she stared steadily toward the boarded door.

"I cannot leave Tomi. So I must stay."

"She's as stubborn as if she was born in Dublin," Kelly said, and then his eyes quickened, and he called: "Keep back now. Here they come. And it looks like a banzai, because they're taking no cover whatever and are bunched together."

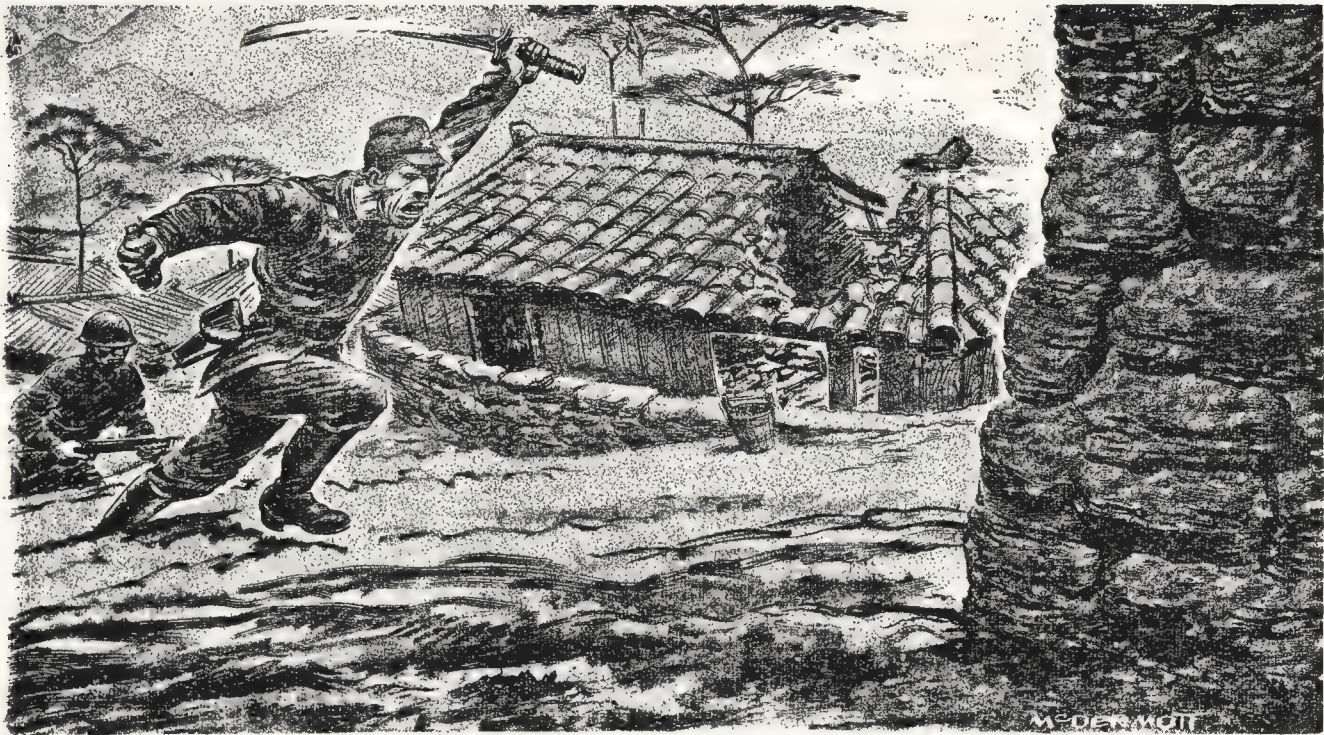
KELLY began to fire; and the Japanese now running across the village street began to fall. He had the extra clip, refilled, by him on the sill, and his pistol well around on his hip.

"There is nothing here," Emi called, with no excitement in her voice. "But I will still watch."

"That's the stuff!" Kelly said hoarsely. "And *there's* another one of them down." He fired faster as the Japanese came on. There must be twenty of them, he thought. He and Emi would never escape it now, Tomi or no Tomi. There were too many against them.

He fired faster and yet faster, and emptied the clip. He snapped another one home, and the carbine was hot in his hand.

"See any, Emi?"



was one in front waving a sword that flashed flatly in the dusk as he rushed the stone building.

"No, Kelly-san."

"Then come here, child."

She came quietly but swiftly on her bare feet, and he told her how to take the grenades out and hand them to him. And then the carbine was empty, and he drew back and began to throw. Got to get them all off fast; no use in hoarding. They were too close now. Dirt and dust rose out there in the weeds. The little house shook from explosions, and fragments rattled back against it.

"Back from the window, child!"

She was pulling the pins now as she had seen him do, and thrusting grenades into his reaching hand. Something struck the tiles of the roof; they could hear it rolling raggedly down. And then there was a blinding explosion just outside their window, where the Jap grenade had fallen. Dust flew at them, and stones; Sergeant Kelly felt the shock of the hunk of hot metal that nearly downed him.

Outside, close up, the Japs were screaming; stumbling up the slope crazily, and there was one in front waving a sword that flashed flatly in the dusk as he rushed the stone building. And there was a lot of firing from behind; so they weren't all in this death-race. Cooler ones back there covering the windows with fire.

A bullet tore through Kelly's helmet, knocking it from his dazed head.

"It was too heavy for me, anyway," he grunted. "Now I can really see to fight." He threw one of the remaining grenades. "The pistol next; and I'll have to do it to the poor little thing with the first shot out of it. It's no time now to take chances."

He peered out through the clearing dust. "That's stopped them for a while. But it won't be for long."

"Come closer, child. Turn your little head—toward the window there, so that you can see if they come."

"I want to be close to you, Kelly-san," she said. There was fear in her now, the fear of the child.

"The flag," Kelly said. "Take out your little flag. For we're going down like Americans both, even if you did have the misfortune to be born in a foreign place like this. —Take that, you dirties!"

The next to the last grenade was thrown; the sun was down, and dark was in their faces. Dark and death; and Kelly felt the touch of the child's head against his side. He gave her a quick glance; the flag was there in her two sad little hands, and she was looking at him with all there was to her with her big dark eyes.

"I wish I could be an American," she said simply. "Now, as I die."

The tears of tenderness mixed in Kelly's eyes with the tears of his rage. He shouted above the roar outside:

"Sure, American you'll be, if it's the last act I do! Here and now I make you an American. I'll swear you in, you understand?"

She didn't understand, and he repeated it in simpler words in Japanese. She nodded her head and smiled.

"Hold up your little hand with the flag against your heart and say what I say, right after me. American words."

She held her hand against her trembling chest. The stained flag hung limply down from the thin fingers and Kelly chanted loudly:

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States—"

He didn't laugh at the way she said it, and he threw the remaining grenade before the last words "*Liberty and justice for all*" came from his bleeding mouth.

"Turn around now, darling," he said. "Face that window. And then, forever after, American you will be."

She smiled at him, a grave happy smile, and then she turned. Sergeant Kelly raised the cocked pistol, placed its muzzle at the base of her skull and then turned his head.

THE First Sergeant said: "This is the ringleader, sir. That's a thing I'll swear to; but I can't get nothing out of him."

In the unnatural glare from the gasoline lamp, the recruit's face looked pale for all his tan. The others huddled behind him in the tent, awkwardly at Attention. The Colonel glared at the thin, gawky one hard.

"Leader, indeed! What I'm trying to find out from you is how you happened to go to his tent? A transient here, whom you'd never seen."

The recruit shifted his feet and looked once, swiftly, at his fellows. But there was no help there. They were glassy-eyed with fright. They didn't know him.

He gulped. "Like I said: I went there. And I seen this note."

"Why did you go there?"

He gulped again. There was no help forthcoming. He plunged to his doom.

"The night before when all the shooting started and we thought it was

Japs 'chuting down on us, he led us up the hill. While all them others was just laying around and yelling."

"Just not making fools of themselves, you mean."

He gulped again and went on:

"I figured he was an old soldier who'd been in all the wars, and someone tells me his name is Kelly and pointed out his tent. So I went in to talk. And when I read the note—"

"The note that was addressed to me, you mean?" the Colonel said coldly, and he nodded at a crumpled piece of paper lying on his bunk.

YES sir. When I read the note and it said how ashamed he was about last night, and how he could only wipe it out by dying in battle, and so he was going over to Kachi where that nest of Japs is, I—"

"You took over," the Colonel said. "Didn't report to me or any of your officers, but just went out to settle the issue yourself; you and a few other under-aged fools."

"We never had a chance to fight, being under nineteen; and now the war's all over. And we all liked him. He sure knew his business. Because he didn't know the Japs wasn't coming down on us. He sure *led* us."

As he said that, he turned to the others, and fear seemed to have left him. The others met his eye this time and nodded as he said:

"Aint that right, Pete—Buck?"

"It sure is," one of them said, and the Colonel said: "Take them back to their quarters."

And as they tagged out of the tent, he called to the gawky one: "What's your name?"

There was no backwardness now. The recruit turned and a faint grin came to his face.

"Private Kelly, sir!"

The Colonel sighed deeply, and looked at the medical officer. And a faint grin came to his hard face.

"Well, I guess they're not psychos, anyway."

"Slightly extroverted, rather. Good Lord, though, think of it! They steam

right over there, only five of them, and land on those Japs like the Marines in a movie! Just in time! The old man was out, and he was only alive then because the Jap that got to him had this knife in his neck."

"The little girl did it, you think?"

"Had to. He couldn't have done it with his left hand; it was broken. And his right still gripped the pistol, the safety on and not a shot fired. These kids that went out got the others. They came in on the side of the town and got the Japs from behind. That Kelly claimed he bayoneted two of them."

"He would," the Colonel said. "And I'd have to be out of camp when it was all going on! Let's take a look at the other two."

Just outside the hospital tent, in the dark, the Colonel cursed as he nearly fell flat. He picked himself up from the tight rope, pushed aside the opening to the tent and the light from within gleamed in the white goat's eyes.

"Who tied this damned goat here?"

The hospital orderly and the medical officer looked at each other. "I just—" the orderly started, but the officer said, red-faced:

"Hell, I broke down. The poor kid was so— If you'd seen her eyes. Didn't cry or anything. And she did hang onto that rope like grim death. We had to cut on her a little."

"Hmml! Nice and sanitary, eh? This the pair?"

They were in cots, side by side: Kelly-san and Emi-san. And both were far away in sleep.

"The old man made a row about taking the kid away," the medical officer said, his face still red. The Colonel looked at him, wagged his head.

"You're as bad as those under-nineteens," he said. "Are they coming out of this?"

"Yes. The kid was dirty and banged up; mostly shock. The old man's as tough as an old turkey, in spite of what he took."

"Quite a day for the Kellys," the Colonel said. He looked down at the

quiet face of the child. One thin hand was on the edge of the cot, the fingers still clutched to the rope of the goat, although someone had tied the end to a water-can handle.

He was turning from the cot when he bent down, peering at a spot of color clutched in the other hand.

"Acquisitive little devil. Looks like a flag."

"American flag, too," the M. O. said. "Old and new blood on it. And some writing on one of the white stripes. Haven't got my glasses. But she hung onto it like grim death."

The Colonel didn't need glasses, and he bent over the sleeping child, frowning.

"Guard this proudly," he muttered. "Looks like Eddy . . . no, Freddy—Pop."

He patted the thin hand, straightened up.

"Funny what kids will treasure! Even Jap kids," he said. "I've got one about her age back home." His voice was so strange the M. O. looked at him curiously. It didn't seem possible. He turned from the child and looked down at Sergeant Kelly. He was himself again now.

"Will you look at that! Grinning like a baby in his sleep. You've seen them do that?"

"That's when they're dreaming happy," the M. O. said.

AND that's what was happening to Sergeant Kelly. He was standing before the General, straight and stiff in his best tropical worsted and the General was pinning a Silver Star on his blouse.

"That's for you," the General was saying, then took from the aide another just like it.

"And this," the General was saying, "—this is for Freddy."

"It's the morphine in him, I suppose," the Colonel said, turning away.

But it was not the morphine; it was a prescience of reality. For the first and only time, Sergeant Francis Kelly, the dreamer, was experiencing a dream that came true.

Ship Ahoy!

A Quiz

by A. E. Dembitz

AS the name "Dick Whittington" brings to mind a cat, "Colonel Bowie" a knife, and the "Earl of Chesterfield" a coat, so do the names of many sea-captains, sailors and ship-builders—real and fictitious—recall famous ships with which they are inseparably linked. Here are lists of fifteen such well-known men and their ships; can you match the two groups?

1. Capt. Bligh a. Courser
2. Donald McKay b. Monitor
3. Blackbeard c. Nautilus
4. J. Paul Jones d. Victory

5. Capt. Corcoran e. Inchcliffe Castle
6. Lord Nelson f. Argo
7. John Smith g. Adventurer
8. Old Stormalong h. Queen Ann's Revenge
9. Capt. Nemo i. Bounty
10. Robt. Fulton j. Chesapeake
11. Capt. Kidd k. H.M.S. Pinafore
12. Jason l. Susan Constant

13. James Lawrence m. Clermont
14. Colin Glen- n. Flying Cloud cannon
15. John Ericson o. Bonhomme Richard

Answers

q-51	w-01	x-5
a-41	c-6	o-4
[-31	a-8	y-3
f-21	l-7	n-2
8-11	p-9	!-1

The Famous Voyage of Sir Francis Drake

into the South sea, and therehence about the whole
Globe of the earth, begun in the yeere of our
Lord 1577.

A few items from
Richard Hakluyt's "Principall
Navigations of the English
Nation," compiled to shew
the Profits of early Voyages
to the Pacific, all illuminated
by Peter Wells, a later and
lamentably insolvent voyager.



When we were at sea, our
Generall rifled the ship,
and found in her good
store of the wine of Chili, and 25000 pezoos of very pure and fine
gold of Baldavia, amounting in value to 37000 ducats of Spanish money..

From hence we went to a certaine port called Tarapaza, where
being landed, we found by the Sea side a Spaniard lying asleepe,
who had lying by him 13 barres of silver, which weighed 4000
ducats Spanish; we tooke the silver, and left the man...

Not farre from hence going on land for fresh water, we met
with a Spaniard and an Indian boy driving 8 Llamas or sheepe of
Peru which are as big as asses; every of which sheepe had on his
backe 2. bags of leather, each bagge containing 50li. weight of fine
silver; so that bringing both the sheepe and their burthen to the
ships, we found in all the bags 800 weight of silver.

Here hence we sailed to a place called Arica, and being entred the
port, we found there three small barkes which we rifled, and found
in one of them 57 wedges of silver, each of them weighing 20 pound
weight, and every of these wedges were of the fashion and bignesse
of a brickbat.... To Lima we came the 15. day of February... we found
there about 12 sayle of ships... Our Generall rifled these ships, and
found in one of them a chest full of royals of plate and good store
of silkes and linnen cloth... And by the way met with a bark... and
found in her 80 li. weight of golde, and a crucifixe of gold with goodly
great Emerauds set in it which he tooke.... Still following the Cacafuego
and our Generall promised our company, that whosoever could first descie
her, should have his chaine of gold for his good newes. It fortunated that
John Drake going up into the top descried her about three of the clocke,
and about sixe of the clocke we came to her and boarded her. and
shotte at her three peeces of ordinance, and strake
downe her Misen, and being entered,
we found in her great riches, as
jewels and precious stones,
thirteene chests full of royals
of plate, foure score pound
weight of golde, and sixe and
twentie tunne of silver..."

After a few more such
dealings, Sir Francis sailed happily
on to discover San Francisco
Bay, and from there on
around the world...



A Lady Scouts Out

The man who befriended her, drifting down the Mississippi, found life by no means dull. . . . A short novel—

by RAYMOND S. SPEARS

ALADY came down the Ohio, through the Jump-off at the Mississippi Forks. She was tall, shapely and independent. She had a good twenty-four-foot scow-hull, seven feet wide and with panel doors onto the decks; but the cabin frame was covered with tarpaper. She passed by Putney Bend eddy, where trippers generally stop to catch their breath getting that far down. She pulled in below the big sandbar and rowed with her sweeps well into the deadwater eddy, then threw over an anchor on a tarred manila rope, cleating it fast on the bow bumper.

Standing there, she looked at the sunset, her fists doubled up and flat-knuckled, *akimbo* against her hips. The sun was just down to where it shone, wheel-spoking, sword-slashing through the clouds which were boiling and twisting around, sure picturesque and suspicious. Then the doorways of the clouds folded together, and the twilight settled gray and gloomy, shutting out the flashing and sparkling.

Rumors that a lone woman was coming down the Ohio had been brought ahead of her by whisky-boater supply runners and fast-going power-boat trippers. Word that she had just a tarpaper sheathing for a cabin on a select cypress-plank scow-hull and varnished decks just didn't sound reasonable to me, but there she was. I hadn't believed the rumors; descriptions had been accurate enough, and of course it could have been true; at that, as she stood there before my eyes I couldn't make up my mind what I saw was so. But it could be true, even down Old Mississipp', where anything is likely to happen.

She ducked through the panel doorway into the cabin, and presently smoke boiled up blue and hot out of a four-inch iron smokestack surrounded by a piece of sheet copper so the tarpaper wouldn't be set on fire. She was getting supper before dark—this was toward the first of October. That made me feel kind of hungry, so I lit



my gasoline cookstove and got ready for an early meal myself. I had to light my round-burner oil lamp so I could see plain, though it was still daylight outside.

While I was bringing out cornmeal for mush-and-sweet-milk, I heard a low humming and rumbling roar off across the open bottoms to the southwest, growing louder as the sky grayed gloomier. Birds were flying around, plumb noisy and nervous, migrators looking for roosts, I thought to myself.

Then a tree branch big as a man's thumb fluttered down where I saw it through my outside window. I was moored bow and stern along the bluff bank, tied to a stump and a cypress snag sticking out the slope, close to the water. The gangplank at the bow and a spar at the stern held me off against the ropes. The fluttering branch surprised me. Then came a lot of leaves and twigs, and a pestering of hailstones from the size of peas to marble taws. As they whacked on the roof, clattering and rattling, a pouring rain of drops big as teacups splashed

in fury fore and aft and alongside. The bluff bank began to pour down mud.

I ran out on my stern deck, which was protected by a projecting roof, thinking of that woman out there in the open eddy. Sure enough, she'd heard and felt the whirlwind blasting around and opened up her bowdeck doorway to look out. It would have been comical, if it hadn't been so serious.

The wind was a gale of swirls, ramming into that tarpaper cabin, which exploded, both sides and up. Pieces of tarpaper flew, winging away for all the world like a flock of crows and mudhens. All it left was just the framing of the cabin. The frame was good and sound. Of course, it had been pure foolishness, using tarpaper without board sheathing, and instead of three-ply roofing in the first place.

Of course, that lady might just as well have had no shelter at all as that framing the wind left. Rain and hail poured down in circles, spirals and streaks, all at once. Sure soused, her waist was plastered down, and her middling short skirts ballooned and flapped out around like she was ballet-dancing, or soloing. Perhaps if it had been any other woman, she would have screamed her head off, scairt; but this one just looked surprised and plumb indignant, as if even the weather hadn't ever treated her that-away before.

SHE was the first bobbed-hair woman I ever saw. There she stood, face to the wind, while the rain and hail sloshed and pounded. When the rain hit her stove, steam burst up in white streaks, fog. A kettle and frying-pan on the stove slid off on the floor, tilted by the boat hull whipping around. Her things hanging on hooks along the frame plates puffed out and wrung-twisted. The bedclothes on her bunk raised up and flew down to the cabin floor, tangling and wrestling with coats, skirts, union suits, waists, long stockings.

So much rain splashed into the scow-hull it looked like it might swamp, though only two or three inches of rain cloudbursting down, and the two decks ran a lot of water through the scuppers. She stood there sure bristling, and her clothes plastered down tight, snug over her nice shape. The hailstones only lasted a minute or two, but I could see the red spots where they smacked on her shoulders a minute after they landed. Enough water got into the scow to set the floor, resting on the bottom stringers, all awash. She sure steamed with indignation.

Even old-timers get caught that-away, anchored out or landed in the full sweep of the wind. I'd learned to tie in under bluffs so that south and west winds would blow over, clear of the hull cabin. I had a hood over my outboard motor launch, and my skiff and canoe were covered with canvas. Soon as I could, I got my outboard turning over and drove over to offer my help to the lady, if she wanted it. She scowled, suspending judgment, looking at me sharp, sizing me up.

I told her I was Pack Winston, kind of a wildcrafter, and did some news pieces for newspapers, and so on, as if we was complete strangers. "I got a big wagon-cover that'll cover that framework," I said, "but we can't do much till the wind settles down. You better go aboard my boat. There's some dry clothes—men's—hanging around; and while you're changing, I'll see what I can do, getting your

boat over under the bank lee. This is sure a swinjer!"

She looked at me real serious for a minute, while I was getting a towline onto a sweep-pin head, hoisting in the anchor and towing over under the bank out of the wind, which had shifted around to the northwest. She stepped aboard my sterndeck, and I got her boat made fast to two stumps, and a snag, where it'd stay. She had good new rope, and her stove and cooking things was all new, too.

I DRAGGED the wagon-cover from under my iron bed and rove staging through the grommets, good white trot-line, which I'd soaked in crude oil to preserve it. I unfolded the cover from the bow, upwind, up over the cabin frame and down over to the stern deck. I made fast with the staging lines along both sides and down at the ends. I'd found that wagon-cover where it'd shook off an Army truck on a highway. It weighed fifty pounds or so, and I'd wondered what I'd ever do with it. Old Mississip' tended to that question.

Soon as I had the hull protected, and the water falling raining down over the sides, instead of inside, I brought my suck-hose from my outboard motor and poked the intake down into the hull water, and it wasn't but a few minutes and I had the hull empty. In the meantime, I kind of picked up around, bedding, clothes, and opened up the lockers so the canned goods, and other things'd

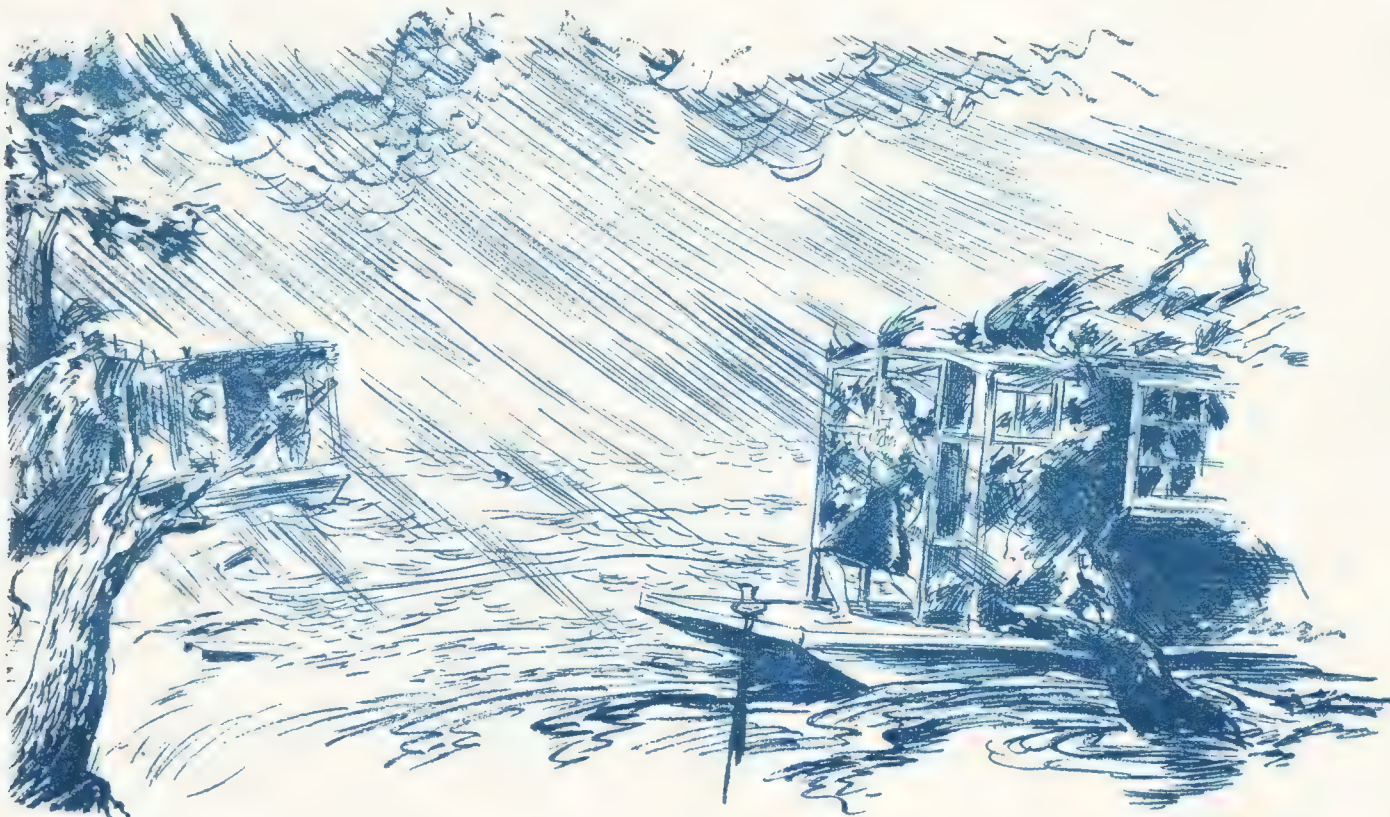
dry out. She sure had plenty! Even flour, cornmeal, beans and such loose things in bagging hadn't got wet to speak none of, except perhaps a bit of sipe up from under the floor. The bunk mattress was the worst, but I hung it up where it'd drip.

When I had the wreck fixed up temporary, I carried her rifle, shotgun, a ten-shot .22-caliber pistol, and a mean-looking .38-caliber revolver aboard my boat, so I could dry them out and grease them. As soon as she felt the deck tip down with my weight, she opened the stern door. She was all dressed up in a pair of my corduroys, a woolen shirt and a pair of canvas shoes. She'd combed her hair, and when I got a good look at her face, she was pink-cheeked, bright, blue-eyed and firm-jawed. She looked at the guns I'd tied together so they'd carry convenient. Her eyes kinda squinted. She thanked me.

While I was busy from light of the evening into the dark, she'd stirred up the fire in my soft-coal cookstove and had rummaged around, finding things to eat—catfish steaks, evaporated-cream gravy, hotbread, and berry sauce, wild-grape jelly, things she'd found opened in the homemade ice freezer.

I had time to give the guns the once-over. They was all loaded, but of course I took out the shells, and by the time I'd dried out the breeches over the stove, supper was ready, and on my let-down table.

"I'd sure been in a fix if it hadn't been for you!" she said, but we were



It would have been comical, if it hadn't been so serious . . . that tarpaper cabin exploded, sides and up.

both hungry and didn't waste much time talking.

AFTER supper we cleared away the things and washed the dishes. The norther was roaring overhead; the rain was pouring down; ground-swells were heaving across the eddy and tugging the boats at their lines. We talked along for a while.

"My name is Mildred Taurel," she said. "I tripped down the Ohio out of Emerald River. Wasn't that tar-paper shanty plumb foolish!"

Mildred Taurel? I didn't let on anything. Naturally, no girl or woman starts off down the rivers in a skiff or shantyboat without she has reasons. Only once in a great while does one come down alone. Some elope, and some have a girl friend to trip with. Mostly it's just not having a home fit to live in. But sometimes it's a big hullabaloo that makes a woman cut loose. A woman gets provoked about something; a girl just can't stand it any more where she doesn't fit it—and away they go!

So this was Mildred Taurel! She harked back to the big migration into the Ohio Valley, in the 1780s. A party of pioneers came over the old Paxtang Trail. They headed over into the Emerald River valley and found kind of a scrumptious-looking place to settle.

The Kindalls took claim on a water-power where they built a saw- and grist-mill. The Bouleys opened up a commissary, liquor barrel and accom-

modations where two trails crossed at the river ford. The Wislers and Sterlins found good soil in acreage enough, one on the bottoms, the other on a bench. There were some other families who lived out around, convenient to the fort they built, for Shawnee Indians were coming in scalp-hunting parties from over Sandusky way on the other side of the Ohio. Protection was needed till along came Mad Anthony Wayne and cleaned out the tribes that had whipped General Sinclair.

There was just one odd number among these Emerald River settlers. She was a peart, active young woman, who joined the caravan back in Pennsylvania, riding a saddlehorse and leading a packer or two loaded with a good outfit. She never talked much about herself, only just that she wasn't going anywhere in particular—just leaving back where she came from. She hunted for the party, kept it supplied with venison, bear-meat and fish. She stood watch for watch in the Indian country, and located up the ridge above the grist- and saw-mill. At first she just lived in a wolf cave, but presently she built a half-cabin over the entrance, and one morning she came down to the Bouley store-house bringing three Indian scalps and all their raiding-party outfit.

They were paying one hundred dollars a scalp for Indian topknots in those days; and the Wetzels, Poes, Conrads and other scouts collected regular. This young woman said

they'd tried to raid her cabin and got the worst of it. She collected the money, easy enough, three hundred dollars; and in a shooting match she tied Lewis Wetzel one holiday. No wonder the Indians got killed!

In order to collect on a scalp, a hunter had to sign a receipt, giving his name or making his mark in the presence of two reliable witnesses. Accordingly, Lon Bouley wrote out a receipt:

I hereby state and swear that I did with my own Deckhard rifle, fight, shoot and Kill three Buck Injuns that raided my cave-cabin the said date of October 9, this year 1786.

Signed . . . Mildred Taurel,
Wits. Spinster.
Callah Bouley
Keed Kindall

Come to think about it, this was the first time anyone ever knew this spare woman's name. She wrote her name with a wild-goose quill with gunpowder ink and a very fine flourish. She got her three hundred dollars cash money, tucked it into a belt wallet and bought supplies with some other money she had. One of her packhorses was lost, but she had sold the saddle and other packer.

THE people around realized they didn't have a name for their settlement, and all the families got into quite an argument as to which ought to name the fort. Two or three times they had fights at the Bouley commissary and tavern, and finally they had a meeting.

This woman Mildred Taurel came with the rest. She heard the talk, and then reminded everybody that none of them was the original settler. Nobody knew the man's name, if he was a man. He lived back on the river ridges. He wore brain-tan skin clothes, and rolled his eyes when he met anybody back in the timber. At night men going home from the tavern or a party or trading heard wolves running, wailing as they bounded. Nobody ever saw that first settler at night. Toward night he'd always go sneaking away. Toward morning they'd hear a wolf howling—and presently this fellow scouting out would appear, grinning, squinting, licking his lips.

Some claimed he was a man only half the time; the other half he'd run from sundown to dawn with wolves; they called him a werewolf. After Mildred Taurel claimed the scalp money, the suspicion got around that she hadn't killed the Indians herself, but cashed in for that cave-man. Now and then a woman would ask Mildred about it, but she always had three hundred dollars nest-money to show that she'd kept the money herself.

When the disputing was getting ready to break into a three- or four-



One morning this active young woman came to the Bouley store-house bringing three Indian scalps and all their outfit.

way feud, this spare woman stood up, and everybody quieted down in the fort yard, where the meeting was being held.

"Don't you reckon it'd be better to call this Wereden?" she asked, just as simple as that.

Down through the years and generations the old-timers told the youngsters that story, how everybody had a cold shiver and nodded *Yes*, because that was the right name. Not any of them—unless it was Mildred Taurel—would have settled there if they'd known about that man living back in the castellated limerock bluffs. Some

Toward night he'd always go sneaking away. Some claimed he was a man only half the time.

claimed he was just an outlaw, wanted back in Virginia or at Catfish on the Potomac; but no better name could be had than Wereden.

Afterward, about thirty or forty years, a family showed up with the name of Taurel. No matter who the girl married, if she did, her children claimed *Taurel* for their name. Nobody ever did get it right about those Taurels. They had their own ways, and for a hundred years down to the late 1800s and on, Taurels came into Wereden and had houses, did business, and became important. That-away they got to have property and be in politics, and if they wanted anything they generally got it.

Firstborn girls in the Taurel family were named Mildred. There'd be a grandmaw, maw and a spindling girl—all Mildreds. They had more boys than girls, and the girls had more gumption, get-up and go than the boys. Of course, I was one of those Emerald River folks, or I wouldn't have known all this news, rumor, history and early-day talk. Even when I was just a little chap, I heard about the werewolf that every so often came prowling around through the river edges. And besides the werewolf there was a Mildred Taurel, and no matter who she married, her children were Taurels.

Here was a Mildred Taurel, then and there. She let me think anything I pleased, just then. Waiting for me to figure things, she picked up reading things, books, Government documents, magazines and so on. The Winstons were always great readers, and generally had good educations to be school teachers, preachers and such intellectuals. My folks had got me part way through college, and I was doing real good toward a profession with writing for newspapers as a side-line; but be-



fore I could get graduated, there was a girl and we got married.

My folks had moved away from Wereden when I was going to school. Partly my father thought he saw a better chance somewhere else. Mostly, though, us Winstons were real peaceable, so when we began getting mixed up in those local family disputings, my father sold out the newspaper he had established, aided and abetted by his father. It had got so all the best-quality families wanted news about themselves put down, and about the others played up. . . . Grandpaw was found dead one morning, shot down, so we went over into new country for us.

"You Winstons was always great hands to move around," she spoke up, showing she hadn't forgotten me, or us, but not asking anything.

Of course, I had to say something, explaining, so I told where we went from Wereden, not bragging any, but disclosing the respectable.

"How come you're shantyboating?" she asked flat-footed, impatient.

Of course men, same as women, have their reasons for shantyboating, tripping Old Mississipp', year after year. Some are ashamed; some ridden by morphine, cocaine, and those habits. Others was just born lazy, and some had to run for it. Personally, I wasn't up to my wife's ideas; I didn't measure up; I wasn't big; I'd never pretended, much, and I did have ambition, but not along satisfactory lines. Instead of settling down, comfortable and important, I blew up, quit my safe job, taking a chance instead of playing safe. My wife had money and peart ideas, so she migrated on me, and I got me a shantyboat, living cheap in a floating camp. If I got hungry, I could catch a catfish; if I needed

money, I could trap a mink or otter or even muskrats; and frogs, terrapin, feathers, hickory nuts and such things came along, season after season.

Mildred Taurel sat listening to what I told, and real patient when I picked around on my memory shelves for things to tell her. She knew I wasn't proud, but just independent and stubborn. She fidgeted, some, because she knew I never was much of a hand to brag.

She tore down on me, two or three times, looking at my shelves of books, my typewriting desk and a lot of loose-leaf files. Talking about shooting or fishing for meat, trapping furs, frogging was all right to talk to shantyboaters, river people, but nobody ever did fool those Taurels for long.

Her lips kind of curled up and her nose lifted. She despised anyone who bragged himself up and overbearing, but the way I talked, she showed she mistrusted I was giving myself a low-down that probably had ulterior motives in it. Of course, it isn't polite, asking a river rat how come he's down and out, because lots of men and women are real sensitive about how come they lost out. She knew I was kind of sliding out from under whatever had been the circumstances. The way she looked at me reminded me of some of these firm and opinionated women who have their ideas about how other people ought to behave. I thought to myself that a woman who came down the Ohio in a tarpaper cabin without any sheathing under it couldn't say much, no matter what had started a man, or me, permanent shantyboating.

SO I told her, frankly, how it was. I took the blame for my family bust-up, my wife going disgusted with me, and I objecting to having one of those desk jobs for eight hours steady a day, and two or three extra overtimers. I'd stood being tied down as long as I could, and the chief trouble wasn't the working but the emoluments of being social and having to maintain my position, taking my due place as a citizen in politics, business, community interests; and if I didn't preside, at least I had to puff up those who did. Like most of those lonely men floating on Old Mississipp', there I was, just what I was because I wanted to be, sure contented, independent and no-count—almost.

Shiftless, humble, ashamed—I hadn't any excuses to make. She listened. She nodded. Seemed like she understood.

Of course, we were in quite a predicament, there on my boat, in a way. I'd picked up quite a lot of outfit in the years I'd been floating. I'd drifted a club-boat, and come to find out it belonged to a gang of river pirates. They never claimed it. One thing

I got out of it was a waterproof, winter and summer sleeping-bag. I got it out from the locker under my stern deck, and it was all right, clean, ready for use. So I bid her good night and went aboard her scow, under the big wagon-cover. The boat was kind of damp, but the sleeping-bag was snug, warm and dry.

She didn't saw a word—just looked at me, watched me go. Pleased and surprised, having me turn my boat over to her instead of letting her take the sleeping-bag aboard that ridiculous boat of hers that had had only just a tarpaper covering shack, and not any sheeting planks to brace the paper. . . .

In the morning I was shaping down that heavy waterproof canvas wagon-cover so it would make a scrumptious airtight cabin, when she called me over to my boat for breakfast—fried scrapple, lean sage sausage, buckwheat cakes, coffee—the best I ever drank!—and we sat down to breakfast. The norther was still blowing chill, and it was plumb comfy in the coal-stove heat.

"I've been reading yo'r diary," she said. "Don't you reckon we can be friends? Prob'ly you've heard about me—back at Wereden?"

"I read something in the papers," I admitted, "I wouldn't ask for any better friend than you, Mildred Taurel!"

"You say that—and you're Wereden-borned yourself?" she asked.

"That's why I say it," I assured her.

I KNEW this Mildred Taurel was scouting out. She was Wereden-born and growed. It weren't a big place, but it was big as the basin around would stand. I knowed the breed. All down the years the families all clung there to what they inherited. They disputed and they married and they fought. There were killings and there were helpfulnesses and there were peculiarities. I knowed what Mildred Taurel meant when she come at me, eyes narrowed and tense. She was running out, herself.

"Course, ev'ybody notices a woman—like me—trippin' down alone!" she said. "But together, hit's sure taking chances. They claim I murdered Studen Wisler. Theh's been more Taurels killed up than all the otheh famblies together—like wolves! Theh's always a werewolf Taurel! You know that! And your own folkses moved away, scairt of us—my maw or Gran'-maw Taurel!"

"I know all that," I told her. "I don't fear you, Mildred Taurel! I don't want your hate. I'd admire to have your friendship."

"Theh's a ter'ble mean streak in the Taurels, Pack Winston!"

"Did you eveh know a fambly that hasn't one, Mildred Taurel?" I was



They had their own ways, for a hundred years Taurels came into Wereden, had houses and became important.

serious. "Studen Wisler needed killing."

"Now the Wislers aim to get me hung," she shrugged. "You know the old saying: hang a were legal, an' the werewolf breed dies out."

"Shucks!" I said. "Werewolves is jus' talk! They aint no such things as men by day and wolves by night!"

She looked at me, in the way Taurels could do. She didn't want me or anybody to believe they didn't have weres in the Taurel family. I could see this wasn't going to be any common ornery winter down Old Mississip', with the Wislers and the law trying to catch Mildred Taurel.

Chapter Two

WANTED FOR HOMICIDE

SO Mildred Taurel and me was just friends. The same as two pals, we tripped along down Old Mississip'. She had her shantyboat, which I slept in while it was drying out, having my below-zero sleeping-bag. I had my shantyboat, which she slept in, and looked after getting the meals. I've noticed no two women get the same things for meals, and they get specially impatient with a man who is cooking, or messing around. We weren't lovers nor we weren't sweethearts. We pardnered along.

I shaped down that big wagon-cover snug over the cabin frame of her boat. It was like wrapping a loaf of bread, only on a big scale. The bare framework looked comical, after I'd taken off the small pieces of tarpaper the

nails and tin-head enlargers held. The frame had two window-frames, one on each side. The two decks each had a painted panel door, fitted into the frame. All I had to do was draw the nails and stretch the wagon-cover lengthwise and then down sidewise over the frame and get it nailed fast. Then real carefully I pulled the ends down over to the decks, and cut out the triangles where they folded over. I had to fit in around the copper stove-pipe fire-protector, and draw the canvas back under the carlin overhangs, snug.

When the sun was shining, I put her bunk mattress on the roof, tying it tight, of course, so a cat's-paw of wind wouldn't blow it overboard. It was a long time drying out, but it did after a while. Mildred made so much extra work thataway that I was neglecting keeping my diary and writing news, engineering and history pieces for newspapers and fillers. By the time I got her cabin recovered, she had rummaged through my diary and river notes, clippings and books so she knew a sight more about me than I did about her. One day she stopped me fussing around the two boats, odd-job repairs and so on.

"You git to work!" she told me. "You haint wrote down one word about me blowing my tarpaper cabin up, and how you took me in out that little cyclone harrycane."

So I took sheets of looseleaf with three holes punched along one side, and wrote a page with a carbon copy in under on my typewriter. I started for the morning of that day the storm broke and wrote a thousand words—down to the tarpaper shack coming in around the bar reef and anchoring. Then I wrote three thousand words or so how the wind went in through the front door, when she opened it, and the black pieces of tarpaper exploded out and flew away like birds. Then I wrote the details of finding Mildred Taurel had come down the Ohio and I'd known her away back in Wereden when we was small people.

She read what I wrote, every word, and now she begun to make me put down in black-and-white things I wouldn't have dreamed of writing with her looking on: about the original Mildred Taurel whose children took her name; and the Taurel family, no matter if the girls married, always had Taurel children instead of different names according to their husbands. The way I wrote it made Mildred laugh, the way the Taurel women did, the sound of it queer and distracting. . . .

The weather clearing, we dropped down to Columbus hickories, where we gathered bushels of shellbarks, big as old hen eggs, filling lockers on both boats. Mildred shot all the squirrel meat we needed. I got my mail at



Hickman, and they remembered me at the bank and cashed the two-dollar Sunday-special checks, and the ones for news items.

We crossed over to Winchester Chute and landed under the point at the short eddy above what's left of Island Ten—a sandbar. While I was trying to think of something interesting to editors of Sunday papers, Mildred hunted. She located a flock of wild razorbacks below the chute in the brake and picked off three two-year-olds. I beef-dressed them, and hung them up on gambrel sticks to cool overnight. Then I skinned them out and cut up for smoked hams, side-bacon and sage sausage. We spent three or four days smoking the hams and bacon sides; I had two cleavers and chopped up the jowl and other meat, mostly leans, the way razorbacks are, making sausage. I never fancied those squeezer meat-grinders, because they make a pudding of the meat.

Mildred Taurel, being hillbilly, knew more about seasonings than I did, and nobody in his senses ever disputed with a lady about eats. After the day's work was done, we both of us decided what to write down, and I don't expect there was much of anything we didn't remember. We were real plumb comfortable when Whisky Williams stopped in with a jug of ribbon-cane molasses rum and white-corn mash medicinal whisky. He was heading up to the Forks, but he'd met a store-boater from out of the Ohio. The word was that a lady had come down the Ohio with five thousand dollars reward on her, five hundred dollars from the sheriff of Emerald County and forty-five hun-

dred from the family of the deceased—the Wislers.

Williams didn't lay over none; he wouldn't even stop for dinner; having a big jag-load aboard, he was nervous about Revenuers, and all he would take was a cup of black coffee. He looked at Mildred and then he looked at me. Of course he had the wrong ideas, entirely, but I knew it wouldn't be believed if I told some of the truth. I just said we'd dropped down out of the Missouri, up which I'd been skidded the previous winter. "I wondered what'd become of you," Williams said.

After Mildred served the coffee, he headed on up to Cairo. Then we had to figure on that five-thousand-dollar reward. I asked her if she had had her pictures taken, and she said not lately. We dropped down to New Madrid and anchored above the fish-dock float in the eddy. Mildred kept close while I moseyed uptown. I bought some supplies, talked with the city marshal, and we had a couple drinks. Then I looked over his reward-notice hooks, and sure enough there was one for five hundred dollars for information about one Mildred Taurel, who was wanted as a "material witness" in a killing.

The other one was printed on blue bond paper, and was about the prettiest dodger I ever saw issued by authorities or private detective agencies, or even the Federal bureaus.

WANTED!
Mildred Taurel
\$5000!
FOR HOMICIDE, ESCAPE
&
Material Witness

Sket Wisler Has deposited \$4,500 in the Wereden Bank to be paid for the apprehension of MILDRED TAUREL, and her conviction on the charge of MURDERING Studen Wisler, ALSO, the undersigned sheriff has deposited \$500 for the detention of Mildred Taurel, a material witness and escapee from the Wereden jail of Emerald County.

Signed. Tillya Kindall.

Underneath was a picture of Mildred Taurel, at the age of sixteen years. She was described as five feet, seven inches tall, 130 pounds, dark blue eyes, curly brown bobbed hair, dark complexion, and thirty-six years of age. Added was:

FOOTNOTE:—Mildred Taurel is peart, bright and dangerous. She shoots long and short guns with accuracy. Her temper is quick and she should be apprehended with caution. Studen Wisler was shot dead from ambush at the Taurel family homestead. Mildred Taurel is known to have been in the immediate vicinity at the time.

MARSHALL WINDOM gave me fifty reward-notices, including the Mildred Taurel ones, and I returned aboard our boats with a packload of groceries and supplies. I handed Mildred the two dodgers, and we studied them pretty carefully. The picture showed a girl squinty in the sunshine and tall, skinny and with big cheekbones, the way she looked twenty years before. Mildred shrugged, laughed. "Yo' know, Pack, hit sure pays, having friends!" she said. "I've been



a-fear'd they'd print a picture I had took three-four years ago, but instead of that Sher'f Kindall used that old girly one."

"He's only one-ninth as anxious to get you caught as Sket Wisler," I told her. "Five hundred to forty-five hundred dollars!"

"Looks like!" she chuckled. "The Wislers have lots of money. They always wanted their own way. Sket neveh forgave Maw for not marryin' him. He neveh married. He's old, now—coming sixty! Old an' vengeful! He blames me, account of Studen gettin' killed up."

"Sher'f Kindall thinks you're just a witness," I said. "The way Sket and the newspapers told it, Studen got killed up when he crossed the property line onto the old Taurel place. At the inquest they testified you'd fairwarned Studen Wisler neveh to step foot on that place. If hit wa'n't you, then I figure prob'ly it was somebody you married!"

"Course, I married," she nodded, her face hardening, eyes narrowing. "We Mildred Taurels always kept our own names, married same as single. All yo' better do, Pack, is mind yo' own business, an' quit figurin'!"

This was talking pretty plain. The Taurels had the name of saying what they meant, flat-footedly. All I wanted was to keep Mildred hid out. I thought I was pleasing her, ringin' in somebody else to do the killing. Instead, she was provoked. She hadn't liked it when I said werewolves was just talk. That werewolf strain was a Taurel family pride, same as the tradition about that original spare-woman settler who came with the settlers to Emerald River. The word was she took up with that werewolf first settler back on the limestone ridges, and supplied the pioneers with wild meat during their years of building, clearing, getting settled. It weren't ignorance, the way some claimed, but pride—the werewolf name.

We dropped down to the crossing above Tiptonville and anchored in the eddy on the west side. Studen Wisler had two man-grown boys. They were hard, mean men, big fellows who had started working as lobby dogs in Wisler logging camps, and they knowed timber. Studen and Sket had made

foremen of them by the time they were nineteen or twenty years old. They had some schooling, and had specialized in college, enough to survey, measure and read Forest Service reports. They'd never be patient at having their father bushwhacked, that was certain.

If'n that five-thousand-dollar reward didn't bring Mildred Taurel back to Wereden for trial, some of those Wislers were bound to go hunting for her. She explained that her tarpaper shack boat had been built confidentially, and the tarpaper sheathing had been used because it would have taken a few days to get clapboarding or heavy roofing fabric.

"I had to trip out fast," she explained. "A paper roof was better than no roof; I knowed I'd get me a good cabin, presently!" She laughed.

Helping her hide out practically made me *particeps criminis*. I'd been always real particular, behaving myself down Old Mississipp'. All I violated was game-laws. The Government had a three-nation migratory bird-protection law, but in those days it didn't amount much to shucks. Even big-time judges violated it, till one of them got caught and fined for not having the five-dollar duck license; that was sure funny, for his court associates run him off the bench because he'd violated an international treaty, it looked like. So he lost ten thousand a year or so for saving five dollars. This just shows how complicated living down Old Mississipp' could be, between going hungry, harboring a fugitive and trying to make a living.

Mildred Taurel wasn't a lady to duck and dodge around a proposition. We sat up late down there below Point Pleasant in the eddy.

Who knew when a Wisler posse would come down hunting her, taking her, dead or alive?

"GUESS I better cut loose, going it alone," she told me, shaking her head. I knew the Taurels, from the first one clear down the line, always looked after themselves, especially the Mildred Taurels, who never changed their names, getting married or not. Even now, I didn't think of suggesting she take my name, temporary, till the five-thousand-dollars' reward excitement died down. The minute word was around that she had tripped down the Ohio, I don't suppose there was a peace officer who didn't watch out, wishing he'd be lucky and catch her. She must of been plumb lucky, getting out of the Ohio the way she did.

It wasn't very good cover along down the river. We could have gone up the Obion, into the Scatters below Reelfoot lake. There were blue-holes and bayous we could sneak into; but once in those places, we'd be cornered. Down Plum Point reach, below Car-

ruthersville, there were chutes, islands, towheads, side and main channels. If there was good water, we could hide out, covering up with tree branches and snuggling into little harbors, guts, narrows, any kind of places; but if the river was falling we'd get grounded—stuck.

Al! we talked about for most of that autumn was hiding out, running away, worrying about being overtook by those Wislers. The first Taurel that was killed up after the Indians were driven out the Ohio Valley by Anthony Wayne was bushwhacked by Cobalt Wisler. Then Cobalt was found behind a log back in the Gap where he'd tried to layway somebody, probably the werewolf who had the name of winning the original Mildred. Noting down all those different rumors, traditions, histories and family biographies the way I'd done, I had a thousand pages of Wereden news during nearly one hundred and fifty years of those old Emerald River original families.

A woman is sure hard to convince, arguing or telling plain facts. This Mildred talked ignorant about river tripping. She couldn't get it through her head that down two thousand miles of river, it was only three-quarters of a mile wide, and nobody could really hide out from trippers, whisky-boaters, storeboats, Fish Commission boats, all kinds of power boats going up and down all the time. A Government license boat anchored temporary at Yankee Bar showed Mildred's idea about getting away, keeping out of sight, wasn't easy.

The fellow running this amusement and quencher boat called himself John Mitt. He was hiding out. He never talked. He was bartending a market fisherman and a frogger, when two men came aboard from a launch. They walked in, took one look, pulled guns from shoulder holsters and shot Mitt down as businesslike as target practice. They told the two witnesses to mind their own business, not saying a word. They picked up the ejected automatic-pistol shells, wiped their thumbprints off the doorlatches and threw off the launch painter tie, and away they went. The two fishermen hoisted the anchor of Mitt's boat, and let it float off down the main current, so they wouldn't have to leave Plum Point themselves. Down at Island 35-36-37, somebody dumped Mitt's body overboard and just went right on selling, as if nothing happened. . . .

We went right on down past Memphis, not even stopping, taking a chance of somebody recognizing Mildred. Down toward Walnut Bend, where it's sure wild and secluded, we landed in and I did some early furtrapping—mink, coons, 'possums, three otter and so on. I needed the money, or Mildred Taurel never would have

let me run out those steel-jaws. She hated fur-taking. I had some No. 4 Jumps—and started to run them out for those tricky swamp wolves. Mildred paddled the skiff, and I worked under water from the bows.

"What you going to catch in that set?" she asked about the first one I put down. "Otter? Beaver? Wild-cat?"

"Wolf!" I answered; and she caught up her shotgun and said:

"Take hit up! Don't yo' set for wolves! I'll blow a hole through yo'—three charges of duck-shot!"

AND she had her automatic aimed square at me. If'n she wasn't a werewolf, she was sister to the wolves! I took the trap up. Later, when I found a swamp wolf had got into a beaver set on a log by mistake in a cypress brake, I sure thanked my stars she wasn't with me. She would never have forgiven me—probably would have shot me dead right there! She sure had a quick temper. Generally, I didn't believe she'd killed Studen Wisler; but the quick way she had, ready to shoot, bothered my calculations. Personally, she didn't deny it, didn't admit it; but on Christmas morning, when we was making a roast goose into a dinner for special, two turtlers who were making seventy-five dollars or so a week apiece stopped by long enough to tell us that two men, name of Wisler, were coming down and dragging Old Mississip' looking for a woman, name of Taurel, Mildred Taurel. According to those Wislers, this woman was a killer from away back. She was alone, dangerous and a regular werewolf. Moreover, according to their tell, it was simply inviting sudden death just to cross that woman, let alone take up with her.

We talked back and forth a spell, and they went on to eat Christmas with two sisters down below where they were anchored in the Walnut Bend. That's why they wouldn't eat with us. After they went on their way, we went right on getting our wild goose and fixings ready. It was probably two o'clock in the evening before we finally sat down to the oyster-milk stew for the first round. And it was coming toward twilight when we leaned back, full-fed and only sorry we didn't have more capacity for eating what still looked and tasted good.

Mildred didn't say much. Both of us were thinking all the time we were eating. She'd heard those wildcrafters telling about the two Wislers after that werewolf woman, who was deadly dangerous. That was the name of the Wereden Taurel girls. I'd know about them, because I was borned in Wereden, the Winstons being late settlers in those hills. The minute I found it was Mildred Taurel in that absurd

tarpaper shack boat, I'd had to settle in my own mind if I was willing to take my chances. When she resented my saying there weren't any weres, humans by day and wolves by night, it was plain she was dangerous, *bad*.

Dangerous women have found their way down Old Mississip': my notes was full of that kind of river witches; there had been Mrs. Phorbs, down below Arkansaw Old Mouth: She had seven husbands buried side by side in her cemetery lots. The story was she hung the first one to a carlin in her boat when he came home drunk and beat her up. She coaxed him onto a chair, after he was pie-eyed with jug-liquor. She put a noose around his neck and tied the trot-line over the carlin. She left him there, standing on a wooden-bottom chair. He kicked the chair out from in under him, and when she returned, she cut him down and threw him overboard. He was found with the slip noose around his neck forty miles below, on a sandbar. It got known, because at school the children bragged all their fathers had done, killing bears, taming mules, hunting panthers, fighting, all those prime things. There was Judo Phorbs; she couldn't brag her father, not knowing exactly who he was.

"But I don't care!" She tossed her head. "My maw was wearing the pants, and she hung Paw!"

So she belonged to the children that had proud parents. Then there was the woman at the Ridge below Wolf River mouth. She'd worried and worried because she'd shared in the nine hundred dollars taken off a man whose throat was cut, and bled into a dishpan so it wouldn't mess up the deck.

I had hundreds of stories like that, men and women killing or getting killed. Of course, I'd never mingled with those hard characters, if I knew it. When I found out, I'd be polite,

but I'd cut loose, in a hurry. I didn't have much excuse as regards Mildred, except that she was an old-time neighbor and we'd gone to school, early.

So far, there'd been six of these Mildred Taurels, including this one I was keeping hid out, even if she was rewarded for five thousand dollars on the charge of murder. Those two Wislers, with the law on their side, were looking for blood-revenge. Probably they'd shoot on sight.

Even us Winstons had left Wereden, just so as not to have any trouble with those Wislers—my father having had to self-protect himself from old Jerome Wisler, laying him with two bullets. We was gone when that father of Sket, Studen and the others got to be up and around.

Mildred didn't mention this. I wondered if she knew it. Anyhow, us Winstons were plumb peaceable. I was bothered. I actually didn't want trouble. But here was the situation: I could stay with a lady—a river lady—in distress and need; or I could cut loose and mind my own business. That's the kind of things Old Mississip' puts up to a man.

Chapter Three

THE BOLD WEREWOLF

I'D been up and down Old Mississip' for years. Lots of things had happened to me, like a cabin roof tore off by the winds, being sunk in a skiff, getting lost in a canebrake, and finding a dead man on a sandbar. I'd been in one of the biggest spring tides that ever washed down reach and bend. I'd caught a big motorboat in the drift and got one thousand dollars salvage for rescuing it. Probably the biggest thing ever actually had happened to me, I went out in a cypress planked skiff and took a man and a



When Mildred warned me to mind my own business, I sure behaved.

woman out of the running ice and drift one February night. I felt pretty good about these things, but I'd hardly ever had to draw a gun on anybody, except one night when I caught a fellow trying to steal an open inboard launch I'd found loose and empty in a lonesome bend eddy.

River rats, freshwater pirates, peace officers, whisky-boaters and all those kinds of nuisances had passed me up, or they'd been friendly. I'd kept clear of bumboats, whisky-boat landings, and minded my own business. Besides, I'd been real lucky, keeping out of the way of potential troublemakers. I'd seen scouters, fugitives, various "wanted" going down, but they never stayed around me to amount to anything.

NOW I wasn't neutral any more. Those family troubles my folks had run away from, keeping peaceable, back in Wereden that lifetime ago, had come floating in on me; a little whirlwind had tore up a tarpaper shack right at my landing, and now here I was, protecting a woman and facing up to killers. It could be the woman was a sight more dangerous and troublesome than those hillbillies coming down, looking for her.

Well, of course, even the most innocent of women can get a man into a big trouble. Nobody, not even themselves, ever claimed any of those Mildred Taurels was innocent. Every one of them left her mark in the traditions. Even us Winstons couldn't get out of their reach; there I was, a shantyboater and just as far away as I could get from nuisances, botherations, family troubles—and one of those Wereden problemicals had drifted right in on me; and if I'd wanted to, I couldn't have escaped, and had any peace of mind afterward. . . .

Back in the brakes on kind of a ridge was a plantation, run by a tall, dignified but liberal woman. Her name was Natha Keets. She had a few children but had got rid of her husband. She was so lonesome that even if Mildred was a shantyboater, she was glad to invite her over for conversations and up-the-bank-eats. That left me looking after the boats, and playing my blow-harp, reading and waiting. As luck would have it, there I was alone when two men came full tilt down the east-chute current, rounded over into our eddy and swung along side my boat, visiting. There they were, those two Wislers!

I would have known old Sket if he'd had false whiskers and wore clothes without any patches on them. But there he was, perfectly natural. His nephew, Studen's boy Sturdy, had the Wisler lips and long, pointed jaw. They dropped a bowline over my stern outside pinhead, as free as they pleased, and started aboard, but I sur-

prised them, and asked who the hell they thought they were? I had the drop and surprise on them, and they stopped short.

"Why, yo're a man!" Sket exclaimed. "Thought yo' was a woman's outfit!"

Both showed deputy-sheriff badges, and Sket jerked his thumb toward Mildred's boat, with its canvas cabin.

"Why, that's my fur-dryer!" I exclaimed, just like that. It just come to me when I needed that explanation for my having two cabin boats.

"Where'd yo' get it?" Sket demanded.

"'Taint none of yore damned business that I know of!" I told him, adding: "But 'taint no secret. A man and his wife sold hit to me and quit the river. Said they was goin' to California."

They both looked regretful and indignant. They'd come better than a thousand miles, tracing the boat. Of course, they couldn't be sure it was the same boat, on account of here was canvas, instead of tarpaper. They looked at me, but they'd forgotten—old Sket had—the Winston resemblances, and I'd been just a little chap when my folks left Wereden. Probably nobody ever looked more disappointed than they did. Being innocent up-the-bankers, they didn't know Old Mississipp', to speak of. The boy—younster—threw the loop off the pinhead, and they floated out into the chute current and on down toward the main river. I thought I'd got rid of them. Perhaps they'd go to California, looking.



When they were out of sight, I relaxed. Some people just naturally belong, the minute they head off down Old Mississipp'. Some never do get to feel at home. Personally, I'd always had blisters on my palms—in a way of speaking. I was a softpaw. Now I was actually different. I'd stood right there, faced up to those Wislers, calm, indifferent and minding my own business. I'd covered up Mildred Taurel complete and cool as could be. I'd baffled them. When a man gets trained—right—by Old Mississipp', he ought to appreciate it. I never felt so grateful for my schooling and college as I did now, watching those two scoundrels out of sight. Old Mississipp' had used me.

MILDRED didn't come home that night. She'd gone in a skiff and rowed up the bayou to Mrs. Keets' plantation, in the brake. I ate supper alone, feeling pretty lonesome. I'd always enjoyed evenings aboard my boat, reading, posting up my diary, or just sitting there, thinking. Now I was anxious and fidgety. I put the light out and stood out on the decks, looking around. I was blowing my harp, just some steppy tune, when I heard a whimpering back in the brake, followed by a low, miserable howl. Of course dogs act that way about reed and string music.

Then I knew it wasn't a dog; it was a wolf, and a big one. I'd took some swamp wolves, about like coyotes, small and lively. This wa'n't any puny, malarial web-footer. It was big like a timber wolf; and when it let out a yelping wail, it sure raised goose pimples around every hair in my scalp. I kept on blowing my harp, the way a dance orchestra does finishing a piece it has started—come earthquake, killing or hell-bent! That wolf lifted a long, clear chorus a full-breath length; and when I stopped playing there came a yip—kind of mocking and sorrowful.

For a time I just didn't think anything but probably this was a traveler. Wolves are great scoundrels to go wandering away off yonder, southing in winter, northing in summer. All a wolf from up in Canada had to do was zigzag down the Mississippi, cross the iced rivers and probably swim the Ohio, following the swamps and ridges down into Walnut Bend Brakes. Actually, that was all I was thinking, till all of a sudden—

Those Wislers, me, the old Wereden family fusses and feudings, that original Mildred Taurel—and this one I'd been looking after, and now this wolf howling back from the bank in the brake! Of course, us Winstons never took much stock in weres, human by day and wolf by night. I knowed, sensible, just as well as anybody could, that idea was stuff and nonsense. It

couldn't be; it wasn't scientific; it wasn't natural history; I figured it all out plain and sensible—and I loaded Mildred's automatic shotgun with buckshot shells. Of course, I wasn't scairt, but I sure had queer waves of chillings washing up and down my backbone.

I had one of those quarter-mile battery hand-lights, and I got on the cabin roof, where I could throw the beam level along the bottom. I switched it on, all of a sudden; and sure enough, there was a pair of bright red eyes and the gray, slinking figure of a gaunt gray timber wolf, ears up, tail waving, tongue hanging down, grinning. It stood to reason a gray wolf would just naturally get away from a bright light. This one just held her head up, impudent and mocking. I had the repeating shotgun, but I didn't shoot.

I jumped down to the deck and got into the cabin—mine!—quick. I locked both doors, fore and aft. I lighted two coal-oil lamps. I couldn't remember even one of those protections from enchantments, ghosts and weres. Of course, I knew it was just a she-wolf there in the brake, but I knew it wouldn't do any hurt if I could throw one of those spell-breakers at her, just in case she was an exception to the rule that nobody can be a human by day and a wolf by night; of course, Wereden back up the Emerald River had been sponsored by that original settler who had the name of being a were and marrying the original Mildred Taurel. Remembering things I hadn't heard tell about him and the Taurels since I was there in Wereden, I sure despised my common sense.

I LOCKED myself in my cabin, and I stayed locked. I'd hung a goose and three ducks on hooks under the bowdeck porch roof. I was tired, worried—but I didn't go to bed. I rolled up in a spare blanket and a soft-tawed horsehide rug, sleeping on the lockers. I wasn't taking any chances, sleeping where a werewolf had occupied. Naturally, I had to laugh at myself being so finicky.

Then I heard her jump onto the bowdeck. She pulled down those ducks and the goose. She ran up the gangplank. I could feel the boat tremble and lift, relieved of her weight. I'd heard of dogs raiding a boat like that. A wolf could, if she took the notion. I didn't sleep none that night. I had spells when I wrote in my diary so I wouldn't forget how I felt. I never mentioned weres or such like—just a wolf, probably a traveler, howling to my blowharp music, and so on. It was just as well I didn't, the way Mildred prowled into my diaries.

I must have fallen asleep toward morning. A rattling and banging, thumping and calling woke me up. It was after nine o'clock, and Mildred

Mildred didn't come home that night.



had come from wherever she'd been. She'd had breakfast, but she got mine, and talked my head off, how she and Natha Keets had equalized their experiences. I thought I was getting by all right till suddenly Mildred asked: "Where's that goose and the ducks we had hung up?"

I looked at her. She was smiling and had her big blue eyes wide open. I thought something. I went to the bow door and looked out at the deck. Sure enough, there were big tracks, like a dog's, plain as could be on the varnished deck. Mildred followed me, and I just pointed. She burst out laughing. Of course she could read sign as good as any hunter that was tripping Old Mississipp'.

"A dog?" she asked, looking at me sideways.

"Nope—a she-wolf!" I answered, and she laughed again.

I finished my breakfast. She picked up my blowharp—the A one, and then she looked at the horsehide and spare blanket I'd left on the lockers along that side of the boat, opposite the living-room bed. She went over to her cabin, the scow-hulls being end to end, and found my sleeping-bag opened up, airing, the way she'd left it the morning before. Then she turned on me, demanding "*how come?*"

So I told her about the two Wislers, Sket and Sturdy, and the way they'd piled on board, but I'd talked them

down and away. She listened, not saying a word. When I told about that she-wolf howling to my music, she grinned. I never said a word about weres, but of course, those Mildred Taurels knew well enough how anybody who ever lived in Wereden felt as regards even natural wolves, let alone the changelings.

"So you was scairt to get your sleep-in'-bag," she sighed, "and you knowed better'n to sleep where I'd nested!"

Ordinary women sure guess plenty; I found that out while I was married; but this Mildred Taurel just absolutely knowed. She read those she-wolf tracks on the deck and up the bank. She told me that I'd probably been playing the blowharp. And she laughed along, or rather just grinned at the way I'd got shut out those Wislers. But she shook her head.

"They won't go to no California!" she said. "Not when they've talked it over. What fooled them was the wagon-top canvas instead of the tarpaper. Those Wislers aint fools. They just got slow wits."

THE first thing was to move our boats. Mildred was sure the Wislers would come back looking for her. Once they picked up the name of Pack Winston, they'd remember us temporary residents. Thataway they'd sure connect Pack Winston with Mildred



I opened up with my .22 and threw ten or twelve shots.

Taurel. They'd be provoked, and try to get vengeance. Mildred said we might's well hang around Walnut Bend, because of lots of places to hide our boats in bayous, old river lakes, chutes and in back. We moved about three miles into a thickety cypress brake, and I headed out, running my trap-lines.

I was using a cedar canoe, covered with canvas, sized good and painted over with gray enamel. It was shoal draft, flat-bottomed and rounded sides—a cargo Canadian model. It had come bobbing down in the spring tide and I'd picked it up—a nice seventy-five-dollar catch.

I had an otter, six 'coons, eight 'possums and sixteen muskrats—mostly caught in copper and brass snares; four mink and three wildcats. This was a big take, considering. I skinned out what we didn't want for meat or to sell the cotton planter darkies. I come down the chute—and all of a sudden four or five bullets came hissing and thwacking past me. Sure 'nough, there was those Wislers, trying to take advantage of this lonesome river bend. They wasn't used to shooting from a boat, jiggling from a motor and pitching over wind waves and groundswells. Every shot went wide, but they sounded mean enough. They knowed I'd sided with her!

I had a .22-caliber cripple-killer. They had .30-.30s, sounded like; when they'd boarded me, they'd had a shotgun and a .45 nickel-plated short gun. I opened up with my long-rifle slugs and let go at about one hundred and fifty yards. I was in kind of a dead eddy, with no waves and just small swells. I threw ten or twelve shots, and the boy gave a yell and old Sket ducked down, but steering. They gave the motor the gas, and away they went.

I'd won the battle, and as soon as they were gone, I turned up the bayou back in to where we covered up. I knew I'd hit Sturdy, but I doubted if I'd damaged his uncle any. This was

the first time I'd ever used a gun for business—except on thieves down the river—against humans. I was excited, but brave now. I'd never seen Mildred look so hateful, hearing that those Wislers had tried to shoot me, soon as they knew I'd protected her. Somebody down below had known we had tied our boats together during the little tornado and norther; and now of course the word was taken up and down that we hadn't separated yet. I'd fair-warned Mildred there'd be talk, but all she said was:

"We know what's the truth. That's all that's necessary."

SO there we were. I'd traded bullets with men wearing deputy-sheriff badges, and hit one, probably. All those two had to do was tell Mississippi or Arkansaw peace officers I'd bushwhacked and resisted them, and there I'd be! Then they'd have it that Mildred Taurel had taken up with me. Of course, I'd seen lots of those manhunters here and there, but I never had expected to participate, actively. Especially, I was took completely by surprise, tied in with Mildred, who was rewarded five thousand dollars!

Old Mississipp' just seems to figure those things out, so as to see what different kinds of humans'll do, when they get their comeuppance. I'd kept out of such things, pirates, liquor, women, and even had been mighty careful about trapping-fur laws, market fishing and Federal treaty migratory bird laws. Here I was accessory after the fact in bushwhacking murder, and getting shot up in pure cussedness!

I told Mildred. She looked at me, narrow-eyed. She never had been close to me. Now there she sat, as if she was a mile away. She never had looked prettier, unless it was when she was caught in that downpour and her cabin exploded from her by the wind. Presently she asked:

"Sorry, Pack?"

"It's you I'm thinking about!" I told her. "My land! The word'll spread that there's five hundred dollars county and forty-five hundred fambly money lookin' for your blood, Mildred! There'll be a hundred city, county and private blood-money boats cruising around, waiting and looking for you!"

"And yo'll be caught, aiding and abetting?" She kind of smiled.

"Couldn't I take your place, Mildred?" I asked. "I mean as regards Studen Wisler being killed up. Couldn't I have hid out my boat, caught a train, got up to Wereden an' bushwhacked that old scoundrel at the Taurel line fence, where they found him shot dead?"

"Oh, Pack, you wouldn't!" she cried out loud, fairly.

"All they got is circumstances against you," I reminded her. "The main thing is, if'n I could get the killing gun and it was identified, that'd create a reasonable doubt, as regards you. Those Wislers have got me described. They're bound to describe me. Maybe they know I'm one of them Winstons. They helped run us out of Wereden. That's a good enough killing motive, far as lawyers, juries, judges are concerned, even if it's against the Winston human nature and practices."

"But Pack, I didn't kill Studen Wisler!" she blinked, choking, and emotional. "The man who killed him must have just wanted to befriend me."

"What for did you come down the Mississippi, then?" I asked.

"If I run away, they'd sure think I'd done that meanness!" she answered. "Course, I didn't. I wanted to. I intended to. Studen had had his fair warning. He tried courting me, this way an' that. I sure despised him. They're rewarding me," she laughed, shrugging. "That shows they don't know who actually bushwhacked Studen."

"Was he bushwhacked?" I asked. "Suppose the killer pleaded se'f-defense? Didn't Studen have weapons—guns?"

She looked at me, frowning, puzzled. I don't suppose anybody had figured out the way things were where the killing was. She thought.

"That's so!" she nodded. "He was shot daid. He had his rifle gun in his right hand, ready for business, the way he laid there. I was the one who found him next morning. I didn't intend to kill him out at the fence, even if that was where I'd said I'd get him. I intended to get him when I come to the door and opened it, with him inviting himself in. It just happened I wasn't to home, that night. I was—Well, I was out yonder."

So there it was. If I hadn't seen that she-wolf and felt the hull tipping

when she came aboard for those birds, I just wouldn't have thought anything about what Mildred said, how she'd been out the night of that Studen Wisler killing.

"Course, you haven't an alibi!" I spoke before I thought.

Mildred burst out laughing.

"Not unless I had a whole pack of weres running with me that night, I reckon," she spoke up, looking at me. "Course, when they turned human they could testify—in the daytime."

I never felt so cheap in my life.

"Of course," she pestered me, "no wolf but a were would ever come on board a shantyboat and run off with three ducks and a wild goose from hanging on a nail!"

I tried to laugh. Anywhere but down Old Mississipp', that'd sounded real comical—there and up at Wereden. If anybody ought to know better, it was me. Only now Mildred Taurel—this one sitting there, probably the handsomest woman anywhere between the levees—smiled and rolled her eyes at me. She came over, put her arms around me, kissed me. One time back in Wereden she'd kissed me—just two little chaps. I'd never forgot, even when my wife took to hating me. She had married me just to show how she despised another fellow. When I came down shantyboating, I thought I was all through with women. I'd been fighting to keep the idea, but I'd never won the battle. Even before the storm and tarpaper shack, I'd known Mildred Taurel had me always tormented and chained by a collar leash.

Chapter Four

SILVER BULLETS

WHEN Mildred told me she'd been married, and warned me to mind my own business, I sure behaved. I never mentioned her husband. Of course, I hadn't lost track of back in Wereden. She had married Hep Kindall. The Kindalls were pioneer quality, dignified, political and prosperous, but marrying Mildred Taurel had bothered the Kindalls, same as it had made trouble in those first families clear back to the original Mildred, who was suspected as regards that fellow who hid out in the river ridge den.

Personally, the Winstons never took stock in the idea of werewolf, human by day, gray timber wolf by night. These Mildred Taurels were all sensitive, honorable and careless-acting. They married somebody, regardless of what the families of their husbands thought. Probably none of the women along down the families was more particular than those Taurels. At the same time, the Taurels were always getting into difficulty, and the men got

killed up defending their honor, going to wars, or just naturally being overbearing. And of all the Taurels, the Mildreds were the proudest. It wasn't generally known that Hep Kindall had been killed up, with the Taurels, two of Mildred's brothers, burying him in a cave back in the river ridges from Wereden. It just happened I knew it. In fact, it was one of the first news pieces I ever had printed, but I'd changed the names over to a feud family killing. Of course, I never let on to Mildred anywhere near how much I had traced back about her and her folks.

IF Mildred didn't want it known she was a dead man's widow, I wasn't going to bother her about it. If she wanted to stay loyal to a man she'd helped bury years ago, that was a widow's privilege. At the same time, I felt pretty foolish, now, the way I'd mingled into the old Taurel family troubles and difficulties, just being polite and gallant. I hadn't any particular regard for the Wislers, not for old Sket or for the boy Sturdy. The way they'd shot at me on sight showed their feelings.

Even I couldn't figure myself out, why I'd mixed in, the way I had. The Winstons had left Wereden behind. Before I married, I'd been back; and after my wife cut up and ran out on me, divorcing and marrying again, I'd sneaked back to Wereden. That's how come I knew Hep Kindall got killed up, when he tried to leave the country alone, scart of his wife, who had told

him if he didn't behave himself, she'd turn wolf and bite him, so's he'd die of hydrophobia! Hep had decided he'd rather go hide out in Texas or Oklahoma than behave himself!

Hep had died of some bullets, not of being bit by a werewolf. The Taurels were great hands to talk, sometimes; and this threat to give victims rabies was one of their sayings. I'd met Hep awhile before he was bushwhacked in the gap. He told me what Mildred had said to him. I knew it was just talk, but Hep believed in weres; and when Mildred stayed out overnight, he had his suspicions. I knew it wouldn't do any good, telling him the science that there were no werewolves. After he was killed up, I got to wondering if maybe he hadn't wanted me to encourage him not to believe in his superstitions. It was too late, then. The Taurels never knew that I'd gone with Hep Kindall as far as the gap, and that I'd just turned back when I heard the shooting.

When I slipped back, looking, there was Hep knocked down. There were those Taurels talking things over—and then removing Hep's remains where they figured nobody would ever know what became of him. His folks thought he'd gone to Texas and was scart to write home, because the news might get to the Taurels. I'd gone back home, only Hep knowing I had been around, unless he'd told Mildred, his wife. I'd never known if he had told her. Anyhow, I'd gone shantyboating to wait awhile before trying to meet Mildred sociably. I feared if I hung around, some Taurel would cut my throat, if Mildred knew I was around that night.



They both looked regretful and indignant—they'd come a thousand miles.

Lots of people would have got the wrong idea about Mildred showing up at her husband's killing the way she had with her brothers. The fact of that matter was, she'd come home and found Hep Kindall had left, and taken his rifle, some money he'd cached, and a packload of supplies and outfit. He'd said he'd run away, the way she abused him. As he was gone, she headed for the gap through the river ridges hitting for the Old Ridgeback Trace leading cross country to the Mississippi. Just as she arrived up the gap point, the shooting came.

Sure enough, her brothers had bushwhacked Hep for trying to desert their sister. She was too late. She sure did cuss down her two brothers for not minding their own business. She told them they ought to be hung; that they ought to rot their lives away in jail; that she ought to kill them both for not minding their own business! But of course, it'd mean two more Taurel widows and some children, and Hep was dead. She cussed them, helped bury Hep in a short cave, and warned them never to speak to her or about her again!

KEEPING track the way I did, it seemed as though I always just missed out. The first time I went back to the Wereden country, Mildred hadn't been married more than two weeks. Not knowing that, I met her up at her place. She had looked at me.

"You fool!" she said to me. "When I've been married half a month, you come showing, big as life! An' I waited, Pack Winston!"

I'd seen her since, but she'd not seen me till I had to shelter her on my shantyboat when the norther blew,

and the little tornado had blown her tarpaper cabin into small pieces. Now she was scouting out, five thousand dollars blood-money on her head, and the Wisler family trailing her down the Ohio and Mississippi, bound to kill her, or catch her, if they had to; and they knew I was aiding and abetting her; of course, Studen Wisler wasn't worth five thousand dollars; if he was worth anything, it'd be his hide, and nothing else. The Kindalls had all treated Mildred kindly, when Hep ran out on her. They were provoked that he'd never wrote back home. . . .

Mrs. Natha Keets, Mildred's plantation widow friend, had some newspapers; and come to find out, I'd put two .22 slugs into Sket Wisler and one into Sturdy Wisler, chest shots, and so serious they had to lie in a hospital more than a week before they could be took home back to Emerald County. They didn't know my name—they hadn't recognized me—but they made up for that, describing Mildred Taurel, and saying "she has the disposition of a she-wolf." This was how close they came to telling about all those Mildred Taurel werewolves.

"A close watch is being kept for the woman," the paper said. "All the peace officers of towns and counties down the Mississippi have been notified, five hundred dollars reward by Emerald County sheriff and forty-five hundred by the Wisler family as an incentive for her capture."

Mildred hadn't killed Studen Wisler. She'd been justified, the brags he'd made and the circumstances surrounding the killing. She had told me she had run away just to protect whoever had killed Studen. That was the reputation of loyalty the whole line of Mildred Taurels had from the

day the original one joined the pioneers on their way and who settled in the Emerald River basin. This loyalty wasn't all the reputations they had, of course, for there had been that werewolf idea, and there'd been killings, just happen-sos, and in the feuds along down.

Now there we were, Hep Kindall's widow and me, hiding out down the Mississipp'. There's no telling how many men and women have run off down the rivers and over the Jumping-off Place, the way we had, for reasons and necessities as good and difficult as ours.

OUR whole trouble was that scoundrel Studen Wisler; he was mean, dishonorable, proud and despicable. There's no telling how many people had said he needed killing. But of course those Wislers couldn't let the old feuds and family notions and personalities sleep, like hound dogs. In fact, if it hadn't been for that foolish talk about werewolves in the Taurel family, even the Wislers wouldn't have said a word about Studen getting killed up, the way he had.

When posses are riding, thirsty for blood-money, and only the swamp brakes cover those scouting, the sunshine searches out the fugitives and casts their shadows clear and plain. At night, through the brakes come the tracking wail of bloodhounds, and the voices of the owls who watch the runways during the dark. Of course, all my life from small boyhood I'd hunted 'coons and 'possums; there'd been times when I'd courted, lurking through the bresh of the mountang slopes; and when I was man-grown, I'd found comfort and peace hiding out, living on the chestnuts, hickory nuts, wild apples and fruits of abandoned orchards.

Mildred and me—sitting in my cabin-boat—sure were lonesome. Nobody has meaner feelings than those the law is hunting for. I'd known men who had been running from murder more than thirty years, never knowing peace. Even when one kills, self-defending, dread rests heavy on the heart. The way things were, I had to ask questions; they never was women who hated questions worse than Mildred Taurel; I trembled and asked:

"Where were you that night Studen Wisler was killed?"

"None of yo'r business!" she snarled at me.

"I've got to know," I told her. "We'll sure be caught. These blood-money hunters sure are closin' in on us. If you were in one place, they'll think something, come the inquests, the actions of the grand juries, the trials before petty juries!"

She looked at me, sharp, frowning, lips separating.



"Where was you?" she demanded. "If'n you don't know, then where was you?" I crowded. "Was you on the run, that night? That moon was shining bright, but clouds came and went. Silver spots quivered under the trees one minute; the next it was shrouded with black velvet."

"Why—Pack!" she gasped. "Then yo' know I was running that night!"

"That's why you couldn't prove you didn't shoot down Studen Wisler theh at your line fence?" I demanded.

She looked at me, crinkling the corners of her eyes over her temples. She turned her face away, first one side, then the other.

"They were running," I took her to her word. "Weres!" I watched her close. "Of course, werewolves know what's going on, nights like that—but their testimonies would never be took in a God's world court."

She nodded, coloring up and whitening to color up again. Lawse, but she was pretty—beautiful, settling back, turning, shrinking away. All down the generations, years, those Mildred Taurels had never testified in court—not in murder, not in meanness, not in shiftless, stealing, trifling cases. Even by day they wouldn't tell what they saw. Come night, and they shrugged off the hand of the law—because nobody has to testify against himself. Wouldn't it be bitter telling, if'n a woman was a werewolf and she was witnessing as she went sneaking in the dark?

WHAT dif'rence who 'twas bush-whacked Studen Wisler, if'n you didn't?" I asked. "That wasn't any of yo'r business—or was it?"

"It was, Pack! Studen told he was coming to our Taurel old place," she declared. "He did, too. I scouted out. I laywayed for him. He short-cut. The firstest I knew, I heard guns a-roaring, down there where our cabin was always built against the cave-rock wall. Studen shot firstest. A good friend of mine shot next. I seen him. The moon shone on him, but he looked white, like a ghost. A cloud shut him off. Next minute he was gone. I was theh. Murder had been done to save me from Studen Wisler!"

"He'd loaded with a silver bullet to kill a werewolf!" I laughed.

She turned white then; all the red shrank from her skin.

"Yo' knew that?" she stared at me. "But nobody knew that but me!"

"Studen melted silver dollars with a blowtorch," I told her. "He molded them in his rifle-bullet mold. He loaded his magazine with all silver bullets. He came there, promising to kill a were—if Mildred Taurel, or anybody, was a human in wolf shape. He didn't shoot straight that first whack or two he took. They found lead bullets in his rifle."

The Taurels never knew that I'd gone with Hep as far as the gap, and turned back when I heard the shooting.



"I know—I buried those silver-bullet shells," she admitted. "But how come you know about those silver bullets?"

"Studen bragged them to me," I answered her.

"And nobody else knowed that!" she shook her head. "They found the silver bullet he shot. It hit an oak tree. It was silver. But in his rifle were lead bullets. They claimed I shot him, and he shot at me as he fell dead. That's the testimony. Only a friend of mine would have stopped Studen Wisler crossing the line fence into my land!"

"And you didn't recognize him!" I reminded her. "That killing was none of your business, and you let them think you did it!"

"Those silver bullets in the rifle made it my business," she declared. "That's why I took those .38-.55 shells with the white bullets, and put in ordinary lead ones. Course, he'd shot—the silver slugs were to shoot at me, they were! They indicted me, for they found that silver bullet he fired. They claimed he wouldn't shoot at anyone but me, the were, with a silver slug. And I was right there."

"Studen was shot with a .30-.30. You always carried a .25-.35."

"Why shouldn't I take the credit of that killin', done to save me trouble with that scoundrel at my own door?" she demanded. "And Pack Winston, nobody eveh said you was there in the Emerald River basin! How come? You know more'n anybody else—naming those silver bullets cast!"

"I found Studen back on the River Ridges," I answered. "I'd come by

night train, and I left by night train down by the Ohio River. Course, it weren't none of my business. I didn't want to mix in."

"Oh, no! Yo' didn't—much!" she jeered me. "All you did was kill Studen Wisler! So it was you I was covering tracks for! So they'll convict the both of us for killin' Studen!"

"You got it wrong," I told her. "I knew you were running out that night, going Indian, they call it. Studen went to your cabin-cave. When he was coming away, I met him at the line. He said I'd fair-warned you and tried to shoot me. I self-defended. That's all."

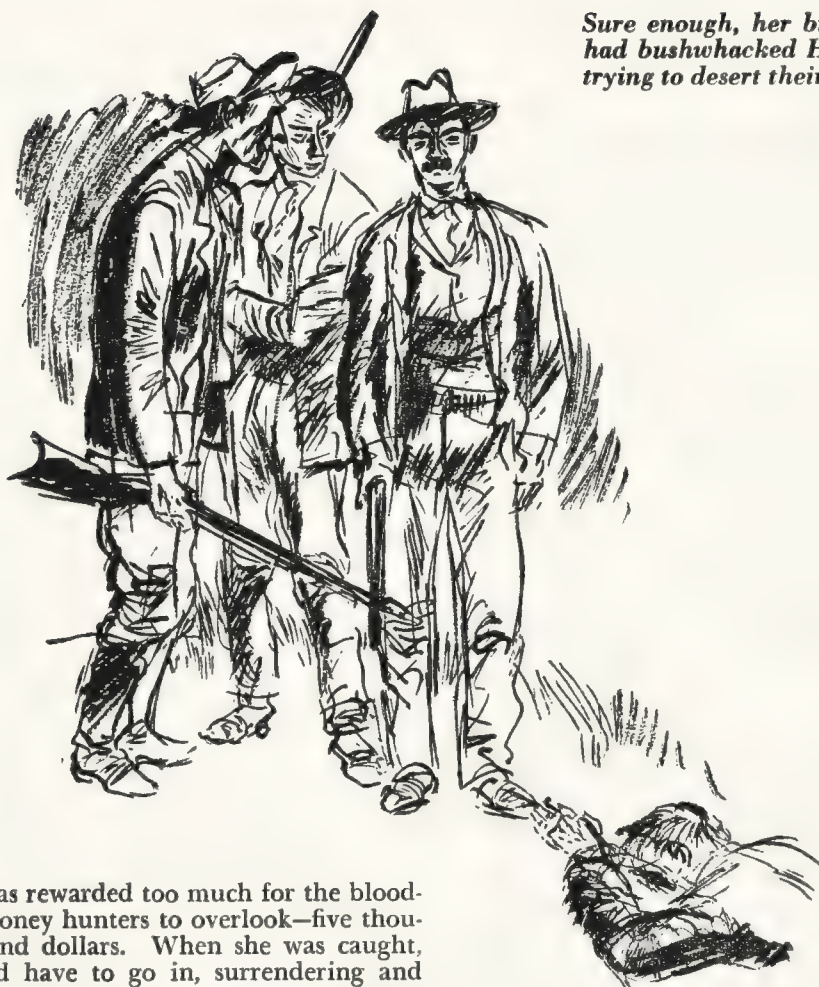
"Just so we get convicted—executed together!" she shrugged.

SO there we was. If the truth was told, she'd stood and watched me kill up that scoundrel Studen Wisler who had come to the old Taurel place, toting silver bullets in his repeater to shoot Mildred Taurel, if she was a werewolf that night, or to claim her if, after all, she was human. He'd made all those brags to me, the way that kind is apt to proclaim his big intentions. I'd got to her place before he did, and as she was gone that night, I let him pound the door and go inside—no harm done to her.

When I laughed at him, there't the line fence footpath blocks, he suspicioned I'd headed him off. He'd known she always favored me, Packy Winston—that she'd begrudged marrying Hep Kindall when I showed back at Wereden that time.

Now it looked as though old Mississippi had tricked us both again. She

*Sure enough, her brothers
had bushwhacked Hep for
trying to desert their sister.*



was rewarded too much for the blood-money hunters to overlook—five thousand dollars. When she was caught, I'd have to go in, surrendering and confessing. Her testimony'd cinch the case against me. If I wasn't hung, electrocuted, or whatever, I'd waste the rest of my life in the penitentiary. Even if they didn't press the case about Studen Wisler, they'd get me for resisting those two Wislers, wearing deputy-sheriff badges in plain sight.

Mildred and I talked it all over now, first to last, right out in the open. All along, since school days, we'd hid out our real feelings from each other. Just when we'd got all tangled up like we was, we admitted at last that, married or single, we'd been tops in each other's hearts. Any minute, now, the law'd step in and grab us, take us back and probably convict us for getting shut of a man who needed killing.

SO there we sat, arm in arm, remembering what might have been. Of course we knowed what to expect. Old Mississip' sure helps conjure up all the meanest, sickliest, sorriest troubles that might be coming. We'd never really found each other; we'd never got shut of each other. Now, together, we didn't know what minute we'd be rounded up, took back to Wereden facing murder charge, trial, conviction!

Just the same as nobody knows how many thousand scouts have fled down to the Lower River, there we

were. If'n I'd minded my own business and never listened to Mildred Taurel's call to my heart, I could have lived free of the law ever menacing me. Down through more than seven-score years, those Mildred Taurels had been taunted, tormented, inheriting the name of werewolf practices and superstitions. As much as anybody they had belonged there in the valley of the Emerald. Every one of those proud, handsome, competent women had been mingled in those old pioneer family feuds. Men who scorned them by day had come pestering around by night—and like Studen Wisler got their comeuppance. And now, if'n a Mildred Taurel was overtook and executed, according to law, those bright, independent women would cease being, so it was said.

A man feels small and mean floating down old Mississip' on a big spring tide: hung up on a sandbar in low water far from anywhere human, a man sure knows what it is to be helpless; come the tornado winds and the terrible dark of being lost afloat in the night, and nowhere in thickety canebrake, Gulf coast marshes or alone in a big city does a man feel so lonely and troubled; but no matter where Mildred and I could run was there any escape from the menacing dread of

law—and worse yet, the grim, desperate, hopeful blood-money greed.

I'd protected Mildred Taurel from Studen Wisler's hateful scoundrelism; I'd defied his silver bullets and his far-spreading family connections; and she, not knowing who had rid her of Studen's threat, had tried to draw off the law-hounds and the reward-money hunters from whoever had favored her—only to get us both cornered there in the Walnut Bend Dark Corner. We wasn't really important, only just no account shantyboaters; but of course we had fears and feelings, dreads and despairs. Time itself was like that monstrous old river, carrying us down into the dark future.

Chapter Five

OLD MISSISSIP' IS SURE PRANKISH

WHEN the law actually means business and gets after anybody, nobody gets away. Back in Wereden the traditions of all those years since 1780 came snowballing down the line. Feuds, politics, religion, education, business, family ups and downs—all those things had mingled facts with ideas, and history with problems and jealousies and greeds and hard, mean, inherited feelings. Old-timers gave way to newcomers growing up. The Emerald Basin administration was run by Kindalls, mostly, and they were probably the most honorable, independent and upright of the population. . . .

Natha Keets, that timberbrake planter and farmer-logger, had Mildred over to her place one day. I was running my traplines, same as usual. The winter fur-prime season was practically over with, excepting for muskrat and beaver. I'd had a big winter, the best ever. It had been hard work, skinning otter, snick by snick, stretching dozens of muskrat hides, selling 'coon and 'possum to the darkies back on the hills, and protecting the hides from moldering or loosening the fur, or getting rancid—all the things that can happen to raw furs.

We'd had a February rise, and the spring tide was liable to come from April through June. Then, of course, clouds of mosquitoes would begin to cast their poison shadows on those swamp brakes. I'd always stayed out in the wide open waters, summers. Now it was mosquitoes or lawmen, terrible summer sweltering or facing prison, trial, punishment. Mildred and I didn't feel guilty. We'd just self-protected. Who'd believe that? How could we hope to prove the truth against organized hatred and technicalities and inherited superstitions? . . .

A lone fur-buyer came prospecting through the Lower River Bottoms, looking for trappers' takes like mine,

and I got a good price, so I sold every hide and pelt. Old Mississipp' went out of its banks with the spring tide, and drift began to run. I caught an open launch with a six-horse outboard motor. Then a sleek, low, whisky-runner's boat came bobbing—good for a thousand dollars' salvage. Logs, lumber, small stuff came along, which I chain-dogged. This was a big season, sure enough!

I decided not to fish. I never liked handling carp and other hoop-net commercial take. Another thing, that meant two or three times a week contacting fish-tugs, and never knowing who was on board. I'd never hid out before; of course I'd done a little feather shooting, trapped where I wasn't supposed to, but I'd always kept away from habitual, bad, mean river classes, like pirates, dope-runners, bumboaters and such unpopular illegalities. Rewarded by the law just makes one suspicious; and the more respectable a tripper seems to be, the more dangerous he could be. The more innocent and honorable a man looked, the more apt he was to be a detector or blood-money snooper.

So Mildred and me mistrusted everybody. Every day was dubious. Looking ahead, we was worried all the time. Days I turtled and nights I frogged; and it was a big summer, toiling and making money. We sure was small and trifling in those big bottoms and wide waters; we were just afraid and ridiculous, with the law overhanging us. A constable told me I might make a good stake, if I could find that five-thousand-dollar lady from up the Ohio. She was hanging out with John Doe, who was wanted for bushwhacking two peace officers, Sket Wisler and Sturdy Wisler, and assaulting them with deadly weapons. I'd never been rewarded before, and five hundred dollars sure did sound spiteful.

THE autumn broke cool and pretty, with less rains than usual, and us two could have been good company and profitable if it hadn't been for peace officers picking up men and women up and down the river, and getting disappointed because they was just ornery and no 'count. But supposing it had been us, Mildred and me? Even being respectable and such good friends and interesting company only made matters worse instead of indifferent and satisfactory.

Ahead of us, as long as we lived, loomed that murder charge and *particeps criminis*. Of course, personally, I could beat the charge of criminal assault with a deadly weapon, partly because I'd used a .22-caliber rifle, but chiefly because nobody could tell what courts had jurisdiction, the river had wriggled back and forth so much. If I'd killed those badge-wearers, they

might have thought it was worth while having a survey, under the State and Federal auspices; but both the Wislers was cured and up and around.

The trouble was, Studen Wisler was dead, shot down, and the family was provoked and the lawyers saw some fine points of law, public sentiment and questions of what a jury would do according to whatever facts could be dug up and presented. Another thing, if a district prosecutor could make a good showing against the woman who had been indicted for homicide in the first degree, he would be remembered, and clients would figure he was a good man to have on their side.

The Wislers showed how ugly they felt, how insulted they had been, having Studen killed, that they modified their reward money put up by having twenty-five hundred dollars offered just for the capture of Mildred Taurel. Instead of moderating and figuring it wasn't any use, they didn't ask for conviction to boot. In fact, they offered two thousand dollars extra for conviction. When we saw some notices got out later with red, blue and black ink, and full of artistries, it sort of took the tucker out of both of us.

One long, gray, miserable autumn day, we'd sat around trying to read, talk, perk up, hidden out in the cypress brake, when all of a sudden Mildred spoke up with a weary voice and full of hopelessness, saying:

"I'm going back!"

That was like the Taurel women. They made up their minds, and they got things over with. Even if I'd thought different, it wouldn't have made any difference. She insisted that we get married, because that-away we couldn't give each other any bad testimonials, wives being protect-

ed from husbands, and husbands from wives, according to the Constitution. So we separated and went back to Emerald County and Wereden on two railroads. The main idea was to have Sheriff Tillya Kindall cash in on the forty-five-hundred-dollar reward, and the five-hundred-dollar county reward. All he would take was the reward off the Wislers, not wanting to take the county reward, but liking the idea of the confidential five hundred dollars Mildred gave him. Of course, those Wislers was disgusted, Mildred collecting her own reward.

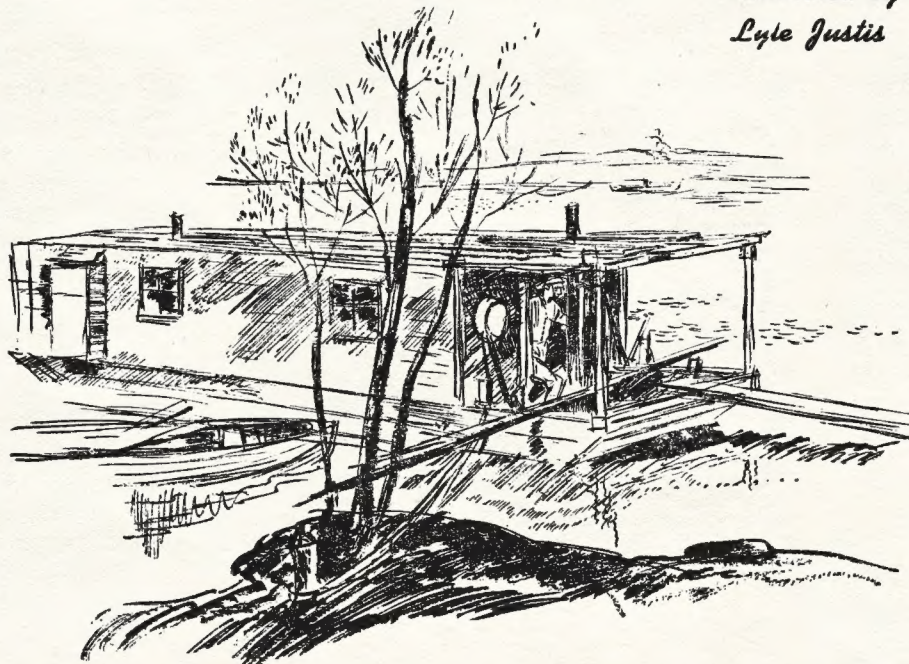
OUR lawyer was sure smart. He knew law and he was very intelligent, besides. We told him just how Studen Wisler had come to the old Taurel place with his .38-.55 rifle magazine full up of shells which he had home-loaded with silver bullets he melted out of dollar coins. He knew about shooting changelings, witches, and all kinds of weres with silver bullets, lead ones not being any good in such cases.

"Then he came to Mildred's inherited place to kill her!" Judge Keybolt exclaimed. "Premeditated murder!"

"Another thing," I reminded him: "Old Studen shot first at this John Doe who shot him in his head; and he couldn't have shot after he was hit by that mortal bullet in his brain."

"John Doe pleads self-defense," the lawyer said. "And Mildred she pleads self-defense. That shows plain. Of course, it's a nice point of law if a werewolf can plead self-defense under the Constitution when he's only part-time human. Besides, it's up to the prosecution to prove Mildred was at any time in the form of a wolf. Yes sir, we've got a sure-fire defense!"

*Illustrated by
Lyle Justis*



ACCORDINGLY, he went to court and had the grand-jury indictments quashed. The Wislers practically went broke when hard times set in, for mortgages, notes, commercial papers stormed down on their lumber business like a blizzard. Those silver bullets showed premeditation on Studen Wisler's part, pretending Mildred Taurel was a werewolf, nights, and so making an excuse to shoot her. No matter what anybody in Wereden thought about werewolves, it would have been plumb ridiculous to allege such an excuse for killing anybody these days. Of course, back two-three hundred years there were court precedents, but not lately.

Come to challenge things there in Wereden, it was plain that Emerald Country didn't want to fork up whatever it would cost to have a werewolf murder trial. The grand jury sat on the evidence and examined all those silver bullets. They didn't prove there was a werewolf running around. They did prove that Studen Wisler had gone to the Taurel place with his rifle loaded to shoot a werewolf; and according to popular superstition, Mildred Taurel had the name of being a were, and so it was plain Studen Wisler had gone to shoot her; if she shot Studen, then it was justifiable self-defense.

But the grand jury brought in another finding. When Studen was shot, it was through the head; that showed

the bullet that killed him had been fired after he had tried to shoot whoever was there at the line fence. The killer had been shot at first. According to the papers, this shooter Studen tried to shoot was John Doe; nobody knew for certain who he was, but the Grand Jury justified his shooting as self-defense. That settled for whoever John Doe was; and the way things were, the sheriff and prosecutor, county judge, foreman of the grand jury and so on all came and shook hands with me. This was real friendly and polite. They didn't say I was John Doe. At the same time they said they admired a man who self-defended himself, and consequently headed off Studen Wisler's intentions of putting a silver bullet into Mildred, pretending she was a werewolf for justification.

Mildred and I celebrated around, visiting old friends and showing our wedding certificate. Our trip back to Wereden and vicinity was kind of a wedding honeymoon, the way things had turned out. But this was the fall term season of the court circuit, and that freed us both of all those worries and abused conscience and false accusations. We headed back for the Walnut Bend Dark Corner country, before we got to be tiresome visitors.

Lots of people thought it was kind of queer we had turned shantyboaters, but of course that was our business. As far as we were concerned, we were

just another of those couples that darned old Muddy Gut pesters and mistreats, bothering the life out of them for a spell, when they show up below the Jumping-off Place. Lots of people find a sight of comfort and happiness after a lot of misery up the banks. And then again somebody like me, living in plumb comfort and according to his independent and unsociable ideas, finds himself prodded and pestered, just for pure Mississippi River cussedness. Nobody ever does know what to expect when he heads down in a shantyboat, excepting that something is sure to happen. Both Mildred and I'll sure swear to that, from personal experience.

NOW, we got a fine, pretty little girl beginning to grow up, peart and bright, and she has a lot of these juvenile ideas and tendencies. Her name is Mildred Taurel. Of course, that's just according to her mother's traditional family notion. I thought probably some other given name, and Winston, would be better and safer, the way it had been with all those Mildred Taurels all down the line. Course, I don't believe in any such nonsenses as werewolves and children wearing the mother's family name; but a man has to kind of humor the womenfolks. Besides, those Taurel women always were strong-minded. Another thing, names don't make much difference down Old Mississippi!

"There Were Giants in Those Days"

A Quiz

by A. E. Dembitz

YOU don't have to resort to the Robin Hoods and Dick Turpins of Europe for tales of heroes and villains, real or imaginary. Just as interesting although not so well-known are the "giants" of American folklore—men famed for their exploits or deeds of infamy. Here are brief descriptions of ten such men. Can you identify them? Answers at end of quiz.

1. Nicknamed "Scout of the Plains," this expert gunfighter and one-time peace officer made the fatal mistake of sitting with his back to a door in a Deadwood saloon. In that game he held aces and eights, since called the "Dead man's hand."

2. From backwoods bear-killer, to Congressman, to death while defending the Alamo, was the fate of this colonel, an American "Baron Munchausen" and master of homespun wit.

3. Owner of the mighty blue ox "Babe," and the little blue ox "Benny," this brainy logger has become a symbol of prodigious feats and of victories over Nature.

4. Trudging barefoot along the rough trails of Ohio and Indiana for forty-six years on his altruistic missions, this noble eccentric founded many of the present-day orchards of those States.

5. Steel-driving champion of the C. & O., he died in 1870 trying to prove his superiority over a steam drill at the Big Bend Tunnel project. Tradition has since extended his exploits to include cotton-picking and roustabouting.

6. An ex-guerrilla who with his brother and four cousins turned to bank and train-robbing for a livelihood. "He stole from the rich and he gave to the poor," until his career was violently ended by a member of his gang.

7. Greatest of deep-water sailors in the days of iron men and wooden ships, his complaint that ships weren't being built large enough for full-grown men was stilled by the appearance of the *Courser*, legendary history's largest craft.

8. "The Law West of the Pecos," read the sign of a combination saloon keeper and justice of the peace, who sometimes backed his informal legal decisions with a six-shooter.

9. Hanged by the British as a murderer, this swashbuckling navigator and privateer from Scotland left a trail of buried gold along the Atlantic Coast, or so most treasure-hunters believe.

10. Pony-express rider, stagecoach driver, hunter, Army scout, Indian fighter, and "King of the Bordermen," he later became an actor and a successful show producer.

Answers:

1. Wild Bill Hickok
2. Davy Crockett
3. Paul Bunyan
4. Johnny Appleseed
5. John Henry
6. Jesse James
7. Old Sturges
8. Roy Bean
9. Capt. Kidd
10. Buffalo Bill Cody

Who's Who in this Issue



Everett M. Webber

I AM one of these people whose vital statistics make pretty dull reading. Like this: Born? Yes. In 1909, at Charleston, Mississippi. Lived a little while in Missouri; a little while in the Louisiana swamps with alligators, Cajuns, and such. (Papa is a sawmill man, and we went down to beat the worms to a lot of timber a twister had pulled up.) After that, spent a dozen years in central Arkansas. Now with my own family I'm in the Ozarks. I have farmed, taught school, worked in sawmills and brick plants, and picked up a couple of college and university degrees. However, writing is my first and last love.

My wife Olga has done some writing of her own, but we work together on most pieces, and our subjects are usually historical, semi-historical, or with frontier setting of some kind. We also like to write about shanty-boaters, share-croppers, hill-billies (we don't have to smile when we say that, because it includes us) and such people.

Jim Chapman

HAVE been trying to write ever since I was a kid. Succeeded reasonably well the past three or four years and now make my living at it. Have appeared in most of the magazines catering to men and am proud to appear in BLUE BOOK.

Birds and animals have always been among my chief interests. Their lives are full of constant danger and drama. To me there is nothing more interest-

ing than the battle between two bucks or the struggle of some wild creature to survive against its natural enemies.

My wife and I are spending the winter of 1946 in the mountains of British Columbia, hunting, adventuring, observing and getting ideas for more stories. We have a two-months-old baby daughter (as of Sept. 14th) who hasn't yet learned to climb mountains. Am a native Canadian, born on the prairies of Saskatchewan thirty years ago. Outside of writing, my main occupations have been salesmanship, farming and ranching.

Howard Palmer

HOWARD PALMER was born in Nan, a village in Northeast Siam in 1918. His mother and father, Marion Boyd Palmer and May McClusky Palmer, had been missionaries in the country since 1906. Shortly after his birth his family moved to Bangkok, where his father was made president of the Bangkok Christian College. At the age of one, he had been taken to the United States for a year when his parents took their five-year-furlough. His earliest memories are of Bangkok, where he lived until he was nine.

Then, once again, he returned to the States—this time for school. He saw his family only when they came on furlough to this country. Graduating from Evanston High School in Evanston, Illinois, he received degrees from Harvard University in 1939 and Harvard Law School in 1942.



Jim Chapman



Howard Palmer and the Regent of Siam

A month after graduation, he enlisted in the Army. The story of his extraordinary exploit as an OSS officer back in his natal Siam begins on page 88.

James H. Leveque

HE was born in 1906, the eldest of six children. Attended St. Charles Academy, Central Grammar School and Lake Charles High School, all in his place of birth. At Loyola University of the South, received a Ph.B. degree, majoring in history, languages and philosophy. He married Ocie Johnson in Glenmora, La., in 1941. They have one son, James Howard, Jr., born October 12, 1943.

Much of his life has been lived on a cotton plantation his family owns in North Louisiana between Bastrop and Monroe—since his family was chased out of France by the people during the French Revolution, there has always been at least one plantation in the family. . . . Has traveled all over the country except in Northwest—has been store clerk, soda jerk, movie theater manager, magazine editor, newspaper reporter, telegraph editor, plantation manager.

During the war he volunteered in Marine Corps, served in Solomon Islands in defense battalion and signal depot company as radar officer; at end of war, was stationed in Washington, D. C., attached to Bureau of Ships, electronics division. Three letters of commendation, nothing spectacular. Rank: captain. . . . Hobby: Amateur radio, operating station W5HHV.

BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE for DECEMBER, 1946



The Glass Koh-i-noor, by James Howard Leveque; I Pledge Allegiance, by Charles L. Clifford; The Thunderbolt of Indra, by Gordon Keyne; Jehovah's Mules, by Kenneth Perkins . . . Joel Reeve, H. Bedford-Jones, Richard H. Watkins, Georges Surdez and many others